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THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

JULY 35¢

Theory of Rocketry

C. M. Kornbluth

(with a Kornbluth bibliography)

a "new" story by Jules Verne!

Brother Charlie

a novelet by

Gordon R. Dickson

Ron Goulart

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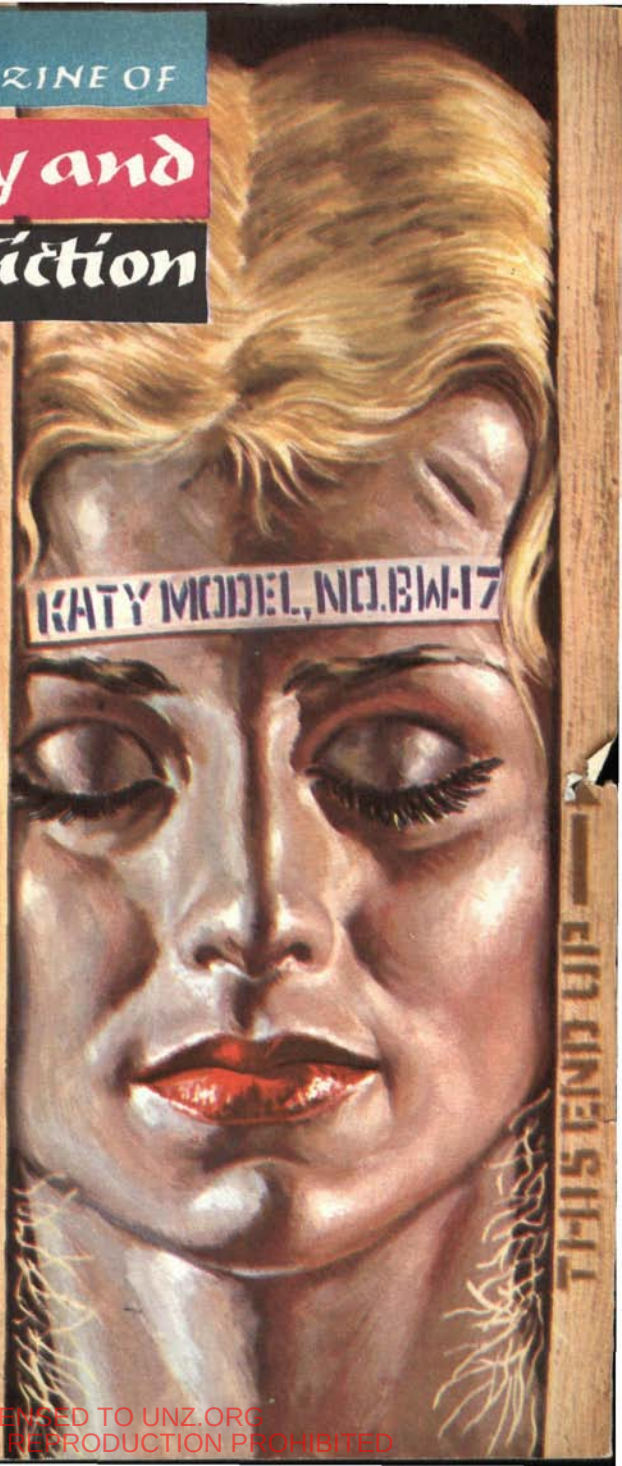

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THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

VOLUME 15, No. 1 JULY

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COVER PAINTING BY BARRY WALDMAN
(*illustrating "The Katy Dialogues"*)

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER — *Anthony Boucher*, EDITOR

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Brother Charlie

by GORDON R. DICKSON

THE MUTTER OF HER STAND-BY burners trembled through the APC9 like the grumbling of an imminent and not entirely unominous storm. In the cramped, lightly grease-smelling cockpit, Chuck Wagnall sat running through the customary pre-flight check on his instruments and controls. There were a great many to check out—almost too many for the small cockpit space to hold; but then old number 9, like all of her breed, was equipped to operate almost anywhere but underwater. She could even have operated there as well, but she would have needed a little time to prepare herself, before immersion.

On his left-hand field screen the Tomah envoy escort was to be seen in the process of moving the Tomah envoy aboard. The Lugh, Binichi, was already in his bin. Chuck wasted neither time nor attention on these—but when his ship range screen lit up directly before him, he glanced at it immediately.

"Hold Seventy-nine," he said automatically to himself, and pressed the acknowledge button.

The light cleared to reveal the face of Roy Marlie, Advance Unit Supervisor. Roy's brown hair was neatly combed in place, his uniform closure pressed tight, and his blue eyes casual and relaxed —and at these top danger signals, Chuck felt his own spine stiffen.

"Yo, how's it going, Chuck?" Roy asked.

"Lift in about five minutes."

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"Any trouble picking up Binichi?"

"A snap," said Chuck. "He was waiting for me right on the surface of the bay. For two cents' worth of protocol he could have boarded her here with the Tomah." Chuck studied the face of his superior in the screen. He wanted very badly to ask Roy what was up; but when and if the supervisor wanted to get to the point of his call, he would do so on his own initiative.

"Let's see your flight plan," said Roy.

Chuck played the fingers of his left hand over the keys of a charter to his right. There appeared superimposed on the face of the screen between himself and Roy an outline of the two continents of this planet that the Tomah called Mant and the Lugh called Vanyinni. A red line that was his projected course crept across a great circle arc from the dot of his present position, over the ocean gap to the dot well inside the coastline of the southern continent. The dot was the human Base camp position.

"You could take a coastal route," said Roy, studying it.

"This one doesn't put us more than eight hundred nautical miles from land at the midpoint between the continents."

"Well, it's your neck," said Roy, with a light-heartedness as ominous as the noise of the stand-by burners. "Oh, by the way, guess who we've got here? Just landed. Your uncle, Member Wagnall."

Aha! said Chuck. But he said it to himself.

"Tommy?" he said aloud. "Is he handy, there?"

"Right here," answered Roy, and backed out of the screen to allow a heavy, graying-haired man with a kind, broad face to take his place.

"Chuck, boy, how are you?" said the man.

"Never better, Tommy," said Chuck. "How's politicking?"

"The appropriations committee's got me out on a one-man junket to check up on you lads," said Earth District Member 439 Thomas L. Wagnall. "I promised your mother I'd say hello to you if I got to this base. What's all this about having this project named after you?"

"Oh, not after me," said Chuck. "Its full name isn't Project Charlie, it's Project Big Brother Charlie. With us humans as Big Brother."

"I don't seem to know the reference."

"Didn't you ever hear that story?" said Chuck. "About three brothers—the youngest were twins and fought all the time. The only thing that stopped them was their big brother Charlie coming on the scene."

"I see," said Tommy. "With the Tomah and the Lugh as the two

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twins. Very apt. Let's just hope Big Brother can be as successful in this instance."

"Amen," said Chuck. "They're a couple of touchy peoples."

"Well," said Tommy. "I was going to run out where you are now and surprise you, but I understand you've got the only atmosphere pot of the outfit."

"You see?" said Chuck. "That proves we need more funds and equipment. Talk it up for us when you get back, Tommy. Those little airfoils you saw on the field when you came in have no range at all."

"Well, we'll see," said Tommy. "When do you expect to get here?"

"I'll be taking off in a few minutes. Say four hours."

"Good. I'll buy you a drink of diplomatic scotch when you get in."

Chuck grinned.

"Bless the governmental special supply. And you. See you, Tommy."

"I'll be waiting," said the Member. "You want to talk to your chief, again?"

He looked away outside the screen range. "He says nothing more. So long, Chuck."

"So long."

They cut connections. Chuck drew a deep breath. "Hold Seventy-nine," he murmured to his memory, and went back to check that item on his list.

He had barely completed his full check when a roll of drums from outside the ship, penetrating even over the sound of the burners, announced that the Tomah envoy was entering the ship. Chuck got up and went back through the door that separated the cockpit from the passenger and freight sections.

The envoy had just entered through the lock and was standing with his great claw almost in salute. He most nearly resembled, like all the Tomah, a very large ant with the front pair of legs developed into arms with six fingers each and double-opposed thums. In addition however, a large, lobster-like claw was hinged just behind and above the waist. When standing erect, as now, he measured about four feet from mandibles to the point where his rear pair of legs rested on the ground, although the great claw, fully extended, could have lifted something off a shelf a good foot or more above Chuck's head —and Chuck was over six feet in height. Completely unadorned as he was, this Tomah weighed possibly ninety to a hundred and ten earth-pounds.

Chuck supplied him with a small throat-mike translator.

"Bright seasons," said the Tomah, as soon as this was adjusted. The translator supplied him with a measured, if uninflected voice.

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"Bright seasons," responded Chuck. "And welcome aboard, as we humans say. Now, if you'll just come over here—"

He went about the process of assisting the envoy into the bin across the aisle from the Lugh, Binichi. The Tomah had completely ignored the other; and all through the process of strapping in the envoy, Binichi neither stirred, nor spoke.

"There you are," said Chuck, when he was finished, looking down at the reclining form of the envoy. "Comfortable?"

"Pardon me," said the envoy. "Your throat-talker did not express itself."

"I said, comfortable?"

"You will excuse me," said the envoy. "You appear to be saying something I don't understand."

"Are you suffering any pain, no matter how slight, from the harness and bin I put you in?"

"Thank you," said the envoy. "My health is perfect."

He saluted Chuck from the reclining position. Chuck saluted back; and turned to his other passenger. The similarity here was the throat translator, that little miracle of engineering, which the Lugh, in common with the envoy and Chuck, wore as close as possible to his larynx.

"How about you?" said Chuck. "Still comfortable?"

"Like sleeping on a groundswell," said Binichi. He grinned up at Chuck. Or perhaps he did not grin—like that of the dolphin he so much resembled, the mouth of the Lugh had a built-in upward twist at the corners. He lay. Extended at length in the bin he measured a few inches over five feet and weighed most undoubtedly over two hundred pounds. His wide-spreading tail was folded up like a fan into something resembling a club and his four short limbs were tucked in close to the short snowy fur of his belly. "I would like to see what the ocean looks like from high up."

"I can manage that for you," said Chuck. He went up front, unplugged one of the extra screens and brought it back. "When you look into this," he said, plugging it in above the bin, "it'll be like looking down through a hole in the ship's bottom."

"I will feel upside down," said Binichi. "That should be something new, too." He bubbled in his throat, an odd sound that the throat-box made no attempt to translate. Human sociologists had tried to equate this Lugh noise with laughter, but without much success. The difficulty lay in understanding what might be funny and what might not, to a different race. "You've got my opposite number tied down over there?"

"He's in harness," said Chuck.

"Good." Binichi bubbled again.

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"No point in putting temptation in my way."

He closed his eyes. Chuck went back to the cockpit, closed the door behind him, and sat down at the controls. The field had been cleared. He fired up and took off.

When the pot was safely airborne, he set the course on autopilot and leaned back to light a cigaret. For the first time he felt the tension in his neck and shoulder blades; and stretched, to break its grip. Now was no time to be tightening up. But what had Binichi meant by this last remark? He certainly wouldn't be fool enough to attack the Tomah on dry footing?

Chuck shook off the ridiculous notion. Not that it was entirely ridiculous—the Lugh were individualists from the first moment of birth, and liable to do anything. But in this case both sides had given the humans their words (Binichi his personal word and the nameless Tomah their collective word) that there would be no trouble between the representatives of the two races. The envoy, Chuck was sure, would not violate the word of his people, if only for the reason that he would weigh his own life as nothing in comparison to the breaking of a promise. Binichi, on the other hand . . .

The Lugh were impeccably honest. The strange and difficult thing was, however, that they were much harder to understand than the Tomah, in spite of the fact that being warm-blooded and practically mammalian they appeared much more like the human race than the chitinous land-dwellers. Subtle shades and differences of meaning crept into every contact with the Lugh. They were a proud, strong, free, and oddly artistic people; in contradistinction to the intricately-organized, highly logical Tomah, who took their pleasure in spectacle and group action.

But there was no sharp dividing line that placed some talents all on the Tomah side, and others all on the Lugh. Each people had musical instruments, each performed group dances, each had a culture and a science and a history. And, in spite of the fantastic surface sociological differences, each made the family unit a basic one, each was monogamous, each entertained the concept of a single deity and each had very sensitive personal feelings.

The only trouble was, they had no use for each other—and a rapidly expanding human culture needed them both.

It so happened that this particular world was the only humanly habitable planet out of six circling a sun which was an ideal jumping-off spot for further spatial expansion. To use this world as a space depot of the size

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required, however, necessitated a local civilization of a certain type and level to support it. From a practical point of view this could be supplied only by a native culture both agreeable and sufficiently advanced to do so.

Both the Tomah and the Lugh were agreeable, as far as the humans were concerned. They were not advanced enough, and could not be, as long as they remained at odds.

It was not possible to advance one small segment of a civilization. It had to be upgraded as a whole. That meant cooperation, which was not now in effect. The Tomah had a science, but no trade. They were isolated on a few of the large land-masses by the seas that covered nine-tenths of their globe. Ironically, on a world which had great amounts of settlable land and vast untapped natural resources, they were cramped for living room and starved for raw materials. All this because to venture out on the Lugh-owned seas was sheer suicide. Their civilization was still in the candle-lit, domestic-beast-powered stage, although they were further advanced in theory.

The Lugh, on the other hand, with the overwhelming resources of the oceans at their disposal, had by their watery environment been prohibited from developing a chemistry. The sea-girt islands and the uninhabited land masses were open to them; but, being already on the favorable end of the current status quo, they had had no great need or urge to develop further. What science they had come up with had been mainly for the purpose of keeping the Tomah in their place.

The human sociologists had given their opinion that the conflicts between the two races were no longer based on valid needs. They were, in fact, hangovers from competition in more primitive times when both people sought to control the seashores and marginal lands. To the Tomah in those days (and still) access to the seas had meant a chance to tap a badly needed source of food; and to the Lugh (no longer) access to the shore had meant possession of necessary breeding grounds. In the past the Tomah had attempted to clear the Lugh from their path by exterminating their helpless land-based young. And the Lugh had tried to starve the Tomah out, by way of retaliation.

The problem was to bury these ancient hatreds and prove cooperation was both practical and profitable. The latest step in this direction was to invite representatives of both races to a conference at the human Base on the uninhabited southern continent of this particular hemisphere. The humans would act as mediator, since both sides were friendly

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toward them. Which was what caused Chuck to be at the controls now, with his two markedly dissimilar passengers in the bins behind him.

Unfortunately, the sudden appearance of Member Thomas Wagnall meant they were getting impatient back home. In fact, he could not have come at a worse time. Human prestige with the two races was all humanity had to work with; and a delicate thing. And now had arisen this suddenly new question in Chuck's mind as to whether Bichini had regarded his promise to start no trouble with the Tomah as an iron-clad guaranty, or a mere casual agreement contingent upon a number of unknown factors.

The question acquired its full importance a couple of hours later, and forty thousand feet above nothing but ocean, when the main burners abruptly cut out.

II

Chuck wiped blood from his nose and shook his head to clear it. Underneath him, the life raft was rocking in soothing fashion upon the wide swell of the empty ocean; but, in spite of the fact that he knew better, he was having trouble accepting the reality of his present position.

Everything had happened a little too fast. His training for emergency situations of this sort had been semihypnotic. He remembered now a blur of action in which he had jabbed the distress button to send out an automatic signal on his position and predicament. Just at that moment the standby burners had cut in automatically—which was where he had acquired the bloody nose when the unexpected thrust slammed him against the controls. Then he had cut some forty-two various switches, got back to the main compartment, unharnessed his passengers, herded them into the escape hatch, blown them all clear, hit the water, inflated the life raft, and got them aboard it just as the escape hatch itself sank gracefully out of sight. The pot, of course, had gone down like so much pig iron when it hit.

And here they were.

Chuck wiped his nose again and looked at the far end of the rectangular life raft. Binichi, the closer of the two, was half-lolling, half-sitting on the curved muscle of his tail. His curved mouth was half-open as if he might be laughing at them. And indeed, thought Chuck, he very well might. Chuck and the envoy, adrift on this watery waste, in this small raft, were castaways in a situation that threatened their very lives. Binichi the Lugh was merely and comfortably back at home.

"Binichi," said Chuck. "Do you know where we are?"

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The curved jaw gaped slightly wider. The Lugh head turned this way and that on the almost nonexistent neck; then, twisting, he leaned over the edge of the raft and plunged his whole head briefly under water like a duck searching for food. He pulled his head out again, now slick with moisture.

"Yes," said Binichi.

"How far are we from the coast of the south continent?"

"A day's swim," said Binichi. "And most of a night."

He gave his information as a simple statement of fact. But Chuck knew the Lugh was reckoning in his own terms of speed and distance, which were roughly twelve nautical miles an hour as a steady pace. Undoubtedly it could be done in better time if a Lugh had wished to push himself. The human Base had clocked some of this race at up to eighty miles an hour through the water for short bursts of speed.

Chuck calculated. With the small outboard thrust unit provided for the raft, they would be able to make about four miles an hour if no currents went against them. Increase Binichi's estimate then by a factor of three—three days and nights with a slight possibility of its being less and a very great probability of its taking more. Thought of the thrust unit reminded him. He went to work unfolding it from its waterproof seal and attaching it in running position. Binichi watched him with interest, his head cocked a little on one side like an inquisitive bird's; but as soon as the unit began to propel the raft through the waves at its maximum cruising speed of four miles an hour, his attention disappeared.

With the raft running smoothly, Chuck had another question.

"Which way?"

Binichi indicated with a short thick-muscled forearm, and Chuck swung the raft in nearly a full turn. A slight shiver ran down his spine as he did so. He had been heading away from land out into nearly three thousand miles of open ocean.

"Now," said Chuck, locking the tiller, and looking at both of them. "It'll take us three days and nights to make the coast. And another three or four days to make it overland from there to the Base. The accident happened so quickly I didn't have time to bring along anything with which I could talk to my friends there." He paused, then added: "I apologize for causing you this inconvenience."

"There is no inconvenience," said Binichi, and bubbled in his throat. The envoy neither moved nor answered.

"This raft," said Chuck, "has food aboard it for me, but nothing, I think, that either one of you could use. There's water, of

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course. Otherwise, I imagine Binichi can make out with the sea all around him, the way it is; and I'm afraid there's not much to be done for you, Envoy, until we reach land. Then you'll be in Binichi's position of being able to forage for yourself."

The envoy still did not answer. There was no way of knowing what he was thinking. Sitting facing the two of them, Chuck tried to imagine what it must be like for the Tomah, forced into a position inches away from his most deadly traditional enemy. And with the private preserves of that enemy, the deep-gulfed sea, source of all his culture's legends and terrors, surrounding him. True, the envoy was the pick of his people, a learned and intelligent being—but possibly there could be such a situation here that would try his self-control too far.

Chuck had no illusions about his ability to cope, barehanded, with either one of his fellow passengers—let alone come between them if they decided on combat. At the same time he knew that if it came to that, he would have to try. There could be no other choice; for the sake of humanity's future here on this world, all three races would hold him responsible.

The raft plodded on toward the horizon. Neither the Tomah nor Binichi had moved. They seemed to be waiting.

They traveled all through the afternoon, and the night that followed. When the sun came up the following morning they seemed not to have moved at all. The sea was all around them as before and unchanging. Binichi now lay half-curled upon the yielding bottom of the raft, his eyes all but closed. The envoy appeared not to have moved an inch. He stood tensely in his corner, claw at half-cock, like a statue carved from his native rock.

With the rising sun, the wind began to freshen. The gray rolling furrows of the sea's eternal surface deepened and widened. The raft tilted, sliding up one heavy slope and down another.

"Binichi!" said Chuck.

The Lugh opened his near eye lazily.

"Is it going to storm?"

"There will be wind," said Binichi.

"Much wind?" asked Chuck—and then realized that his question was too general. "How high will the waves be?"

"About my height," said Binichi. "It will be calmer in the afternoon."

It began to grow dark rapidly after that. By ten o'clock on Chuck's chronometer it was as murky as twilight. Then the rain came suddenly, and a solid sheet of water blotted out the rest of the raft from his eyes.

Chuck clung to the thrust unit

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for something to hang onto. In the obscurity, the motion of the storm was eery. The raft seemed to plunge forward, mounting a slope that stretched endlessly, until with a sudden twist and dip, it adopted a down-slant to forward—and then it seemed to fly backward in that position with increasing rapidity until its angle was as suddenly reversed again. It was like being on a monstrous seesaw that, even as it went up and down, was sliding back and forth on greased rollers.

At some indeterminate time later, Chuck began to worry about their being washed out of the raft. There were lines in the locker attached midway to the left-hand side of the raft. He crawled forward on hands and knees and found the box. It opened to his cold fingers, and he clawed out the coiled lines.

It struck him then, for the first time, that on this small, circumscribed raft, he should have bumped into Binichi or the envoy in making his way to the box. He lifted his face to the wind and the rain and darkness, but it told him nothing. And then he felt something nudge his elbow.

"He is gone," said the voice of the envoy's translator, in Chuck's ear.

"Gone?" yelled Chuck above the storm.

"He went over the side a little while ago."

Chuck clung to the box as the raft suddenly reversed its angle.

"How do you know?"

"I saw him," said the envoy.

"You—" Chuck yelled, "you can see in this?"

There was a slight pause.

"Of course," said the envoy. "Can't you?"

"No." Chuck unwound the lines. "We better tie ourselves into the raft," he shouted. "Keep from being washed overboard."

The envoy did not answer. Taking silence for assent, Chuck reached for him in the obscurity and passed one of the lines about the chitinous body. He secured the line tightly to the ring-hand-grips fastened to the inner side of the raft's edge. Then he tied himself securely with a line around his waist to a handgrip further back by the thrust unit.

They continued to ride the pitching ocean. After some time, the brutal beating of the rain slackened off; and a little light began to filter through. The storm cleared then, as suddenly as it had commenced. Within minutes the raft heaved upon a metal-gray sea under thinning clouds in a sky from which the rain had ceased falling.

Teeth chattering, Chuck crawled forward to his single remaining passenger and untied the rope around him. The envoy was crouched down in his corner, his great claw hugging his back, as

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if he huddled for warmth. When Chuck untied him, he remained so motionless that Chuck was struck with the sudden throat-tightening fear that he was dead.

"Are you all right?" asked Chuck.

"Thank you," said the envoy; "I am in perfect health."

Chuck turned away to contemplate the otherwise empty raft. He was, he told himself, doing marvelously. Already, one of his charges had taken off . . . and then, before he could complete the thought, the raft rocked suddenly and the Lugh slithered aboard over one high side.

He and Chuck looked at each other. Binichi bubbled comfortably.

"Looks like the storm's over," said Chuck.

"It is blowing to the south of us now," said the Lugh.

"How far are we from land, now?"

"We should come to it," said Binichi, "in the morning."

Chuck blinked a little in surprise. This was better time than he had planned. And then he realized that the wind was blowing at their backs, and had been doing so all through the storm. He looked up at the sky. The sun was past its zenith and a glance at his watch, which was corrected for local time, showed the hands at ten minutes to three. Chuck turned his attention back to Binichi, revolving the phraseology of his next question in his mind.

"Did you get washed overboard?" he asked, at last.

"Washed overboard?" Binichi bubbled. "I went into the water. It was more pleasant."

"Oh," said Chuck.

They settled down once more to their traveling.

A little over an hour later the raft jarred suddenly, and rocked as if without warning it had found a rock beneath it, here in the middle of the ocean. For a second Chuck entertained the wild idea that it had. But such a notion was preposterous. There were undersea mountains all through this area, but the closest any came to the surface was a good forty fathoms down. At the same time the envoy's claw suddenly shot up and gaped above him, as he recoiled toward the center of the boat; and, looking overboard, Chuck came into view of the explanation for both occurrences.

A gray back as large around as an oil drum and ten to twelve feet in length was sliding by about a fathom and a half below them. At a little distance off Chuck could make out a couple more. As he watched, they turned slowly and came back toward the raft again.

Chuck recognized these sea-creatures. He had been briefed

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on them. They were the local counterpart of the Earthly shark —not as bloodthirsty, but they could be dangerous enough. They had wide catfish-like mouths, equipped with cartilaginous ridges rather than teeth. They were scavengers, rather than predators, generally feeding off the surface. As he watched now, the closest rose slowly to the surface in front of him, and suddenly an enormous jaw gaped a full six feet in width and closed over the high rim of the raft. The plastic material squealed to the rubbing of the horny ridges, giving but not puncturing. Temporarily defeated, the jaws opened again and the huge head sank back under the water.

Chuck's hand went instinctively to his belt for the handgun that was, of course, not there.

The raft jolted and twisted and rocked for several moments as the creatures tried to overturn it. The envoy's claw curved and jerked this way and that above him, like a sensitive antenna, at each new sound or jolt. Binichi rested lazy-eyed on the raft's bottom, apparently concerned only with the warmth of the sun upon his drying body.

After several minutes, the attacks on the raft ceased and the creatures drew off through the water. Chuck could catch a glimpse of them some thirty yards or so off, still following. Chuck looked back at Binichi, but the Lugh had his eyes closed as if he dozed. Chuck drew a deep breath and turned to the envoy.

"Would you like some water?" he asked.

The envoy's claw had relaxed slightly upon his back. He turned his head toward Chuck.

"If you have any you do not desire yourself," he said.

Chuck got out the water, debated offering some to the Lugh out of sheer form and politeness, then took his cue from the fact that Binichi appeared asleep, and confined his attentions to the envoy and himself. It surprised him now to remember that he had not thought of water up until this moment. He wondered if the Tomah had been suffering for it in silence, too polite or otherwise to ask for some.

This latter thought decided him against eating any of the food that the boat was also provided with. If they would reach land inside of another twelve or fourteen hours, he could last until then. It would hardly be kind, not to say politic, to eat in front of the Tomah when nothing was available for that individual. Even the Lugh, if he had eaten at all, had done so when he was out of the raft during the night and storm, when they could not see him.

Chuck and the envoy drank and settled down again. Sundown

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came quickly; and Chuck, making himself as comfortable as possible, went to sleep.

He woke with a start. For a second he merely lay still on the soft, yielding bottom of the raft without any clear idea as to what had brought him into consciousness. Then a very severe bump from underneath the raft almost literally threw him up into a sitting position.

The planet's small, close moon was pouring its brilliant light across the dark waters, from a cloudless sky. The night was close to being over, for the moon was low and its rays struck nearly level on the wave-tops. The sea had calmed, but in its closer depths were great moving streaks and flashes of phosphorescence. For a moment these gleams only baffled and confused his eyes; and then Chuck saw that they were being made by the same huge scavengers that had bothered the raft earlier—only now there were more than a dozen of them, filling the water about and underneath the raft.

The raft rocked again as one of them struck it once more from below.

Chuck grabbed at the nearest ring-handhold and glanced at his fellow passengers. Binichi lay as if asleep, but in the dark shadow of his eye-sockets little reflected glints of light showed where his eyeballs gleamed in the darkness. Beyond him, the envoy was fully awake and up on all four feet, his claw extended high above him, and swaying with every shock like the balancing pole of a tight-rope walker. His front pair of handed limbs were also extended on either side as if for balance. Chuck opened his mouth to call to the Tomah to take hold on one of the handgrips.

At that moment, however, there rose from out of the sea at his elbow a pair of the enormous ridged jaws. Like the mouth of a trout closing over a fly, these clamped down, suddenly and without warning, on the small, bright-metal box of the thrust unit where it was fastened to the rear end of the raft. And the raft itself was suddenly jerked and swung as the sea-creature tore the thrust unit screeching from its moorings into the sea. The raft was upended by the force of the wrench; and Chuck, holding on for dear life from sliding into the sea, saw the creature that had pulled the unit loose release it disappointedly, as if sensing its inedibility. It glittered down through the dark waters, falling from sight.

The raft slammed back down on the watery surface. And immediately on the heels of this, came the sound of a large splash. Jerking his head around, Chuck saw the envoy struggling in the ocean.

His black body glittered among

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the waves, his thrashing limbs kicking up little dashes and glitters of phosphorescence. Chuck hurled himself to the far end of the raft and stretched out his hand, but the Tomah was already beyond his reach. Chuck turned, and dived back to the box at mid-raft, pawing through it for the line he had used to tie them in the boat earlier. It came up tangled in his hands. He lunged to the end of the raft nearest the envoy again, trying to unravel the line as he did so.

It came slowly and stubbornly out of its snarl. But when he got it clear at last and threw it, its unweighted end fell little more than halfway of the widening distance between the raft and the Tomah.

Chuck hauled it in, in a frenzy of despair. The raft, sitting high in the water, was being pushed by the night wind farther from the envoy with every second. The envoy himself had in all this time made no sound, only continuing to thrash his limbs in furious effort. His light body seemed in no danger of sinking; but his narrow limbs in uncoordinated effort barely moved him through the water—and now the scavengers were once more beginning to enter the picture.

These, like any fish suddenly disturbed, had scattered at the first splash of the Tomah's body. For a short moment it had seemed that they had been frightened away entirely. But now they were beginning to circle in, moving around the envoy, dodging close, then flirting away again—but always ending up a little closer than before.

Chuck twisted about to face Binichi.

"Can't you do something?" he cried.

Binichi regarded him with his race's usual unreadable expression.

"I?" he said.

"You could swim to him and let him hang on to you and tow him back," said Chuck. "Hurry!"

Binichi continued to look at him.

"You don't want the Tomah eaten?" he said at last.

"Of course not!"

"Then why don't you bring him back yourself to this thing?"

"I can't. I can't swim that well!" said Chuck. "You can."

"You can't?" echoed Binichi slowly. "I can?"

"You know that."

"Still," said the Lugh, "I would have thought you had some way—it's nothing to me if the Tomah is eaten."

"You promised."

"Not to harm him," said Binichi. "I have not. The Tomah have killed many children to get at the sea. Now this one has the sea. Let him drink it. The Tomah have been hungry for fish. This

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one has fish. Let him eat the fish."

Chuck brought his face close to the grinning dolphin head.

"You promised to sit down with us and talk to that Tomah," he said. "If you let him die, you're dodging that promise."

Binichi stared back at him for a short moment. Then he bubbled abruptly and went over the side of the raft in a soaring leap. He entered the water with his short limbs tucked in close to his body and his wide tail fanning out. Chuck had heard about, but never before seen, the swiftness of the Lugh, swimming. Now he saw it. Binichi seemed to give a single wriggle and then torpedo like a streak of phosphorescent lightning just under the surface of the water toward the struggling envoy.

One of the scavengers was just coming up under the Tomah. The streak of watery fire that was Binichi converged upon him and his heavy shape shot struggling from the surface, the sound of a dull impact heavy in the night. Then the phosphorescence of Binichi's path was among the others, striking right and left as a swordfish strikes on his run among a school of smaller feed fish. The scavengers scattered into darkness, all but the one Binichi had first hit, which was flopping upon the surface of the moonlit sea as if partially paralyzed.

Binichi broke surface himself, plowing back toward the Tomah. His head butted the envoy and a second later the envoy was skidding and skittering like a toy across the water's surface to the raft. A final thrust at the raft's edge sent him up and over it. He tumbled on his back on the raft's floor, glittering with wetness; and, righting himself with one swift thrust of his claw, he whirled, claw high, to face Binichi as the Lugh came sailing abroad.

Binichi sprang instantly erect on the curved spring of his tail; and Chuck, with no time for thought, thrust himself between the two of them.

For a second Chuck's heart froze. He found himself with his right cheek bare inches from the heavy double meat-choppers of the Tomah claw, while, almost touching him on the left, the gaping jaws of the Lugh glinted with thick, short scimitar-like teeth and the fishy breath of the sea-dweller filled his nostrils. In this momentary, murderous tableau they all hung motionless for a long, breathless second. And then the Tomah claw sank backwards to the shiny back below it and the Lugh slid backward and down upon his tail. Slowly, the two members of opposing races retreated each to his own end of the raft.

Chuck, himself, sat down. And the burst of relieved breath that expelled itself from his tautened

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lungs echoed in the black and moonlit world of the seascape night.

III

Some two hours after sunrise, a line of land began to make its appearance upon their further horizon. It mounted slowly, as the onshore wind, and perhaps some current as well, drove them ahead. It was a barren, semi-arid and tropical coastline, with a rise of what appeared to be hills—light green with a sparse vegetation—beyond it.

As they drifted closer, the shoreline showed itself in a thin pencil-mark of foam. No outer line of reefs was apparent, but the beaches themselves seemed to be rocky or nonexistent. Chuck turned to the Lugh.

"We need a calm, shallow spot to land in," he said. "Otherwise the raft's liable to upset in the surf, going in."

Binichi looked at him, but did not answer.

"I'm sorry," said Chuck. "I guess I didn't explain myself properly. What I mean is, I'm asking for your help again. If the raft upsets or has a hole torn in it when we're landing, the envoy and I will probably drown. Could you find us a fairly smooth beach somewhere and help us get to it?"

Binichi straightened up a little where he half-sat, half-lay propped against the end of the raft where the thrust unit had been attached.

"I had been told," he said, "that you had oceans upon your own world."

"That's right," said Chuck. "But we had to develop the proper equipment to move about on them. If I had the proper equipment here I wouldn't have to ask you for help. If it hadn't been for our crashing in the ocean none of this would be necessary."

"This 'equipment' of yours seems to have an uncertain nature," said Binichi. He came all the way erect. "I'll help you." He flipped overboard and disappeared.

Left alone in the raft with the envoy, Chuck looked over at him.

"The business of landing will probably turn out to be difficult and dangerous—at least we better assume the worst," he said. "You understand you may have to swim for your life when we go in?"

"I have given my word to accomplish this mission," replied the envoy.

A little while after that, it became evident from the angle at which the raft took the waves that they had changed course. Chuck, looking about for an explanation of this, discovered Binichi at the back of the raft, and pushing them.

Within the hour, the Lugh had steered them to a small, rocky in-

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let. Picked up in the landward surge of the surf, the raft went, as Chuck had predicted, end over end in a smother of water up on the pebbly beach. Staggering to his feet with the solid land at last under him, Chuck smeared water from his eyes and took inventory of a gashed and bleeding knee. Binding the cut as best he could with a strip torn from his now-ragged pants, he looked about for his fellow travelers.

The raft was flung upside down between himself and them. Just beyond it, the envoy lay with his claw arm flung limply out on the sand. Binichi, a little further on, was sitting up like a seal. As Chuck watched, the envoy stirred, pulled his claw back into normal position and got shakily up on all four legs.

Chuck went over to the raft and, with some effort, managed to turn it back, right side up. He dug into the storage boxes and got out food and water. He was not sure whether it was the polite, or even the sensible thing to do, but he was shaky from hunger, parched from the salt water, dizzy from the pounding in the surf—and his knee hurt. He sat down and made his first ravenous meal since the pot had crashed in the sea, almost two days before.

As he was at it, the Tomah envoy approached. Chuck offered him some of the water, which the Tomah accepted.

"Sorry I haven't anything you could eat," said Chuck, a full belly having improved his manners.

"It doesn't matter," said the envoy. "There will be flora growing farther inland that will stay my hunger. It's good to be back on the land."

"I'll go along with you on that statement," said Chuck. Looking up from the food and water, he saw the Lugh approaching. Binichi came up, walking on his four short limbs, his tail folded into a club over his back for balance, and sat down with them.

"And now?" he said, addressing Chuck.

"Well," said Chuck, stretching his cramped back, "we'll head inland toward the Base." He reached into his right-hand pants pocket and produced a small compass. "That direction"—he pointed toward the hills without looking—"and some five hundred miles. Only we shouldn't have to cover it all on foot. If we can get within four hundred miles of Base, we'll be within the airfoils' cruising range, and one of them should locate us and pick us up."

"Your people will find us, but they can't find us here?" said Binichi.

"That's right." Chuck looked at the Lugh's short limbs. "Are you up to making about a hundred-mile trip overland?"

"As you've reminded me before," said Binichi, "I made a

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promise. It will help, though, if I can find water to go into from time to time."

Chuck turned to the envoy.

"Can we find bodies of water as we go?"

"I don't know this country," said the Tomah, speaking to Chuck. "But there should be water; and I'll watch for it."

"We two could go ahead," said Chuck, turning back to the Lugh. "And maybe we could work some way of getting a vehicle back here to carry you."

"I've never needed to be carried," said Binichi, and turned away abruptly. "Shall we go?"

They went.

Striking back from the stoniness of the beach, they passed through a belt of shallow land covered with shrub and coarse grass. Chuck, watching the envoy, half-expected him to turn and feed on some of this as they passed, but the Tomah went straight ahead. Beyond the vegetated belt, they came on dunes of coarse sand, where the Lugh—although he did not complain, any more than the envoy had when he fell overboard from the raft—had rough going with his short limbs. This stretched for a good five miles; but when they had come at last to firmer ground, the first swellings of the foothills seemed not so far ahead of them.

They were now in an area of small trees with numbers of roots sprouting from the trunk above ground level, and of stick-like plants resembling cacti. The envoy led them, his four narrow limbs propelling him with a curious smoothness over the uncertain ground as if he might at any moment break into a run. However, he regulated his pace to that of the Lugh, who was the slowest in the party, though he showed no signs as yet of discomfort or of tiring.

This even space was broken with dramatic suddenness as they crossed a sort of narrow earth-bridge or ridge between two of the gullies. Without any warning, the envoy wheeled suddenly and sprinted down the almost perpendicular slope on his left, zigzagging up the gully bed as if chasing something and into a large hole in the dry, crumbling earth of the further bank. A sudden thin screaming came from the hole and the envoy tumbled out into the open with a small furry creature roughly in the shape of a weasel and about the size of a large rabbit. The screaming continued for a few seconds. Chuck turned his head away, shaken.

He was aware of Binichi staring at him.

"What's wrong?" asked the Lugh. "You showed no emotion when I hurt the—" His translator failed on a word.

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"What?" said Chuck. "I didn't understand. When you hurt what?"

"One of those who would have eaten the Tomah."

"I . . ." Chuck hesitated. He could not say that it was because this small land creature had had a voice to express its pain while the sea-dweller had not. "It's our custom to kill our meat before eating it."

Binichi bubbled.

"This will be too new to the Tomah for ritual," he said.

Reinforcement for this remark came a moment or two later when the envoy came back up the near wall of the gully to rejoin them.

"This is a paradise of plenty, this land," he said. "Only once in my life before was I ever lucky enough to taste meat." He lifted his head to them. "Shall we go on?"

"We should try to get to some water soon," said Chuck, glancing at Binichi.

"I have been searching for it," said the envoy. "Now I smell it not far off. We should reach it before dark."

They went on; and gradually the gullies thinned out and they found themselves on darker earth, among more and larger trees. Just as the sunset was reddening the sky above the upthrust outline of the near hills, they entered a small glen where a stream trickled down from a higher slope and spread out into a small pool. Binichi trotted past them without a word, and plunged in.

Chuck woke when the morning sun was just beginning to touch the glen. For a moment he lay still under the mass of small-leaved branches with which he had covered himself the night before, a little bewildered to find himself no longer on the raft. Then memory returned and with it sensation, spreading through the stiff limbs of his body.

For the first time, he realized that his strength was ebbing. He had had first the envoy and then Binichi to worry about, and so keep his mind off his own state.

His stomach was hollow with hunger that the last night's meager rations he had packed from the raft had done little to assuage. His muscles were cramped from the unusual exercise and he had the sick, dizzy feeling that comes from general over-exposure. Also, right now, his throat was dry and aching for water.

He pulled himself up out of the leaves, stumbled to the edge of the pond and fell to hands and knees on its squashy margin. He drank; and as he raised his head and ran a wrist across his lips after quenching his thirst, the head of Binichi parted the surface almost where his lips had been.

"Time to go?" said the Lugh.

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He turned to one side and heaved himself up out onto the edge of the bank.

"We'll leave in just a little while," Chuck said. "I'm not fully awake yet." He sat back stiffly and exhaustedly on the ground and stretched his arms out to bring some life back into them. He levered himself to his feet and walked up and down, swinging his arms. After a little while his protesting muscles began to warm a little and loosen. He got one of the high-calorie candy bars from his food pack and chewed on it.

"All right," he said. And the envoy turned to lead the way up, out of the glen.

With the bit of food, the exercise and the new warmth of the sun, Chuck began to feel better as they proceeded. They were breasting the near slopes of the hills now, and shortly before noon they came over the top of them, and paused to rest.

The land did not drop again, but swelled away in a gently rising plateau, into distance. And on its far horizon, insubstantial as clouds, rose the blue peaks of mountains.

"Base is over those mountains," said Chuck.

"Will we have to cross them?" The envoy's translator produced the words evenly, like a casual and unimportant query.

"No." Chuck turned to the Tomah. "How far in from the coast have we come so far?"

"I would estimate"—the translator hesitated a second over the translation of units—"thirty-two and some fraction of a mile."

"Another sixty miles, then," said Chuck, "and we should be within the range of the airfoils they'll have out looking for us." He looked again at the mountains and they seemed to waver before his eyes. Reaching up in an automatic gesture to brush the waveriness away, the back of his hand touched his forehead; and, startled, he pressed the hand against it. It was burning hot.

Feverish! thought Chuck. And his mind somersaulted at the impossibility of the fact.

He could see the two others looking at him with the completely remote and unempathetic curiosity of peoples who had nothing in common with either his life or his death. A small rat's-jaw of fear gnawed at him suddenly. It had never occurred to him since the crash that there could be any danger that *he* would not make it safely back to Base. Now, for the first time, he faced that possibility. If the worst came to the worst, it came home to him suddenly, he could count on no help from either the Tomah, or the Lugh.

"What will they look like, these airfoils?" asked Binichi.

"Like a circle made out of bright material," said Chuck. "A

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round platform about twelve feet across."

"And there will be others of your people in them?"

"On them. No," said Chuck. "Anyway, I don't think so. We're too short of personnel. They operate on remote-beamed power from the ship and flash back pictures of the ground they cover. Once they send back a picture of us, Base'll know where to find us."

He levered himself painfully to his feet.

"Let's travel," he said.

They started out again. The walking was more level and easy now than it had been coming up through the hills. Plodding along, Chuck's eyes were suddenly attracted by a peculiarity of Binichi's back and sides. The Lugh was completely covered by a short close hair, which was snowwhite under the belly, but shaded to a gray on the back. It seemed to Chuck, now, however, that this gray back hair had taken on a slight hint of rosiness.

"Hey!" he said, stopping. "You're getting sunburned."

The other two halted also; and Binichi looked up at him, inquiringly. Chuck repeated himself in simpler terms that his translator could handle.

"Let's go on," said Binichi, taking up the march again.

"Wait!" said Chuck, as he and the envoy moved to follow up the Lugh. "Don't you know that can be dangerous? Here—" He fumbled out of his own jacket. "We humans get sunburned, too, but we evidently aren't as susceptible as you. Now, I can tie the arms of this around your neck and you'll have some protection—"

Binichi halted suddenly and wheeled to face the human.

"You're intruding," said Binichi, "on something that is my own concern."

"But—" Chuck looked helplessly at him. "The sun is quite strong in these latitudes. I don't think you understand—" He turned to appeal to the Tomah. "Tell him what the sun's like in a country like this."

"Surely," said the envoy, "this has nothing to do with you or me. If his health becomes imperfect, it will be an indication that he isn't fit to survive. He's only a Lugh; but certainly he has the right, like all living things, to make such a choice for himself."

"But he might be mistaken—"

"If he is mistaken, it will be a sign that he is unfit to survive. I don't agree with Lughs—as you people know. But any creature has the basic right to entertain death if he so wishes. To interfere with him in that would be the highest immorality."

"But don't you want to—" began Chuck, incredulously, turning toward the Lugh.

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"Let's go on," said Binichi, turning away.

They went on again.

After a while, the grasslands of the early plateau gave way to more forest.

Chuck was plodding along in the late hours of the afternoon with his eyes on the ground a few feet in front of him and his head singing, when a new sound began to penetrate his consciousness. He listened to it, more idly than otherwise, for some seconds —and then abruptly, it registered.

It was a noise like yelping, back along the trail he had just passed.

He checked and straightened and turned about. Binichi was no longer in sight.

"Binichi!" he called. There was no answer, only the yelping. He began to run clumsily, back the way he had come.

Some eight or so yards back, he traced the yelping to a small, clearing in a hollow. Breaking through the brush and trees that grew about its lip, he looked down on the Lugh. Binichi was braced at bay upon his clubbed tail, jaws agape, and turning to face half a dozen weasel-shaped creatures the size of small dogs that yelped and darted in and out at him, tearing and slashing.

The Lugh's sharp, tooth-studded jaws were more than a match for the jaws of any one of his attackers, but—here on land—they had many times his speed. No matter which way he turned, one was always at his back, and harrying him. But, like the envoy when he had been knocked into the sea, Binichi made no sound; and, although his eyes met those of Chuck, standing at the clearing edge, he gave no call for help.

Chuck looked about him desperately for a stick or stone he could use as a club. But the ground was bare of everything but the light wands of the bushes, and the trees overhead had all green, sound limbs firmly attached to their trunks. There was a stir in the bushes beside him.

Chuck turned and saw the envoy. He pushed through to stand beside Chuck, and also looked down at the fight going on in the clearing.

"Come on!" said Chuck, staring down into the clearing. Then he halted, for the envoy had not moved. "What's the matter?"

"Matter?" said the envoy, looking at him. "I don't understand."

"Those things will kill him!"

"You"—the envoy turned his head as if peering at Chuck—"appear to think we should interfere. You people have this strange attitude to the natural occurrences of life that I've noticed before."

"Do *you* people just stand by and watch each other get killed?"

"Of course not. Where another Tomah is concerned, it is of course different."

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"He saved *your* life from those fish!" cried Chuck.

"I believe you asked him to. You were perfectly free to ask, just as he was perfectly free to accept or refuse. I'm in no way responsible for anything either of you have done."

"He's an intelligent being!" said Chuck, desperately. "Like you. Like me. We're all alike."

"Certainly we aren't," said the envoy, stiffening. "You and I are not at all alike, except that we are both civilized. He's not even that. He's a Lugh."

"I told him he'd promised to sit down at Base and discuss with you," cried Chuck, his tongue loosened by the fever. "I said he was dodging his promise if he let you die. And he went out and saved you. But you won't save him."

The envoy turned his head to look at Binichi, now all but swarmed under by the predators.

"Thank you for correcting me," he said. "I hadn't realized there could be honor in this Lugh."

He went down the slope of the hollow in a sudden, blurring rush that seemingly moved him off at top speed from a standing start. He struck the embattled group like a projectile and emerged coated by the predators. For a split second it seemed to Chuck that he had merely thrown another life into the jaws of the attackers. And then the Tomah claw glittered and flashed, right and left like a black scimitar, lightning-swift out of the ruck—and the clearing was emptied, except for four furry bodies that twitched or lay about the hollow.

The envoy turned to the nearest and began to eat. Without a glance or word directed at his rescuer, Binichi, bleeding from a score of superficial cuts and splashes, turned about and climbed slowly up the slope of the hollow to where Chuck stood.

"Shall we go on?" he said.

Chuck looked past him at the feeding envoy.

"Perhaps we should wait for him," he said.

"Why?" said Binichi. "It's up to him to keep up, if he wants to. The Tomah is no concern of ours."

He headed off in the direction they had been going. Chuck waggled his head despairingly, and plodded after.

IV

The envoy caught up to them a little further on; and shortly after that, as the rays of the setting sun were beginning to level through the trees, giving the whole forest a cathedral look, they came on water, and stopped for the night.

It seemed to Chuck that the sun went down very quickly—quicker than it ever had before;

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and a sudden chill struck through to his very bones. Teeth chattering, he managed to start a fire and drag enough dead wood to it to keep it going while they slept.

Binichi had gone into the waters of the small lake a few yards off, and was not to be seen. But through the long, fever-ridden night hours that were a patchwork of dizzy wakefulness and dreams and half-dreams, Chuck was aware of the smooth, dark insect-like head of the Tomah watching him across the fire with what seemed to be an absorbing fascination.

Toward morning, he slept. He awoke to find the sun risen and Binichi already out of the lake. Chuck did not feel as bad, now, as he had earlier. He moved in a sort of fuzziness; and, although his body was slow responding, as if it was something operated by his mind from such a remote distance that mental directions to his limbs took a long time to be carried out, it was not so actively uncomfortable.

They led off, Chuck in the middle as before. They were moving out of the forest now, into more open country where the trees were interspersed with meadows. Chuck remembered now that he had not eaten in some time; but when he chewed on his food, the taste was uninteresting and he put it back in his pack.

Nor was he too clear about the country he was traversing. It was there all right, but it seemed more than a little unreal. Sometimes things, particularly things far off, appeared distorted. And he began remarking expressions on the faces of his two companions that he would not have believed physically possible to them. Binichi's mouth, in particular, had become remarkably mobile. It was no longer fixed by physiology into a grin. Watching out of the corner of his eye, Chuck caught glimpses of it twisted into all sorts of shapes: sad, sly, cheerful, frowning. And the Tomah was not much better. As the sun mounted up the clear arch of the sky Chuck discovered the envoy squinting and winking at him, as if to convey some secret message.

"S'all right—s'all right—" mumbled Chuck. "I won't tell." And he giggled suddenly at the joke that he couldn't tell because he really didn't know what all the winking was about.

"I don't understand," said the envoy, winking away like mad.

"S'all right—s'all right—" said Chuck.

He discovered after a time that the other two were no longer close beside him. Peering around, he finally located them walking together at some distance off from him. Discussing something, no doubt, something confidential. He wandered, taking the pitch and slope of the ground at random,

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stumbling a little now and then when the angle of his footing changed. He was aware in vague fashion that he had drifted into an area with little rises and unexpected sinkholes, their edges tangled with brush. He caught himself on one of the sinkholes, swayed back to safety, tacked off to his right . . .

— Suddenly he landed hard on something. The impact drove all the air out of his lungs, so that he fought to breathe—and in that struggle he lost the cobwebs surrounding him for the first time that day.

He had not been aware of his fall, but now he saw that he lay half on his back, some ten feet down from the edge of one of the holes. He tried to get up, but one leg would not work. Panic cut through him like a knife.

"Help!" he shouted. His voice came out hoarse and strange-sounding. "Help!"

He called again; and after what seemed a very long time, the head of the envoy poked over the edge of the sinkhole and looked down at him.

"Get me out of here!" cried Chuck. "Help me out."

The envoy stared at him.

"Give me a hand!" said Chuck. "I can't climb up by myself. I'm hurt."

"I don't understand," said the envoy.

"I think my leg's broken. What's the matter with you?" Now that he had mentioned it, as if it had been lying there waiting for its cue, the leg that would not work sent a sudden, vicious stab of pain through him. And close behind this came a swelling agony that pricked Chuck to fury. "Don't you hear me? I said, pull me out of here! My leg's broken. I can't stand on it!"

"You are damaged?" said the envoy.

"Of course I'm damaged!"

The envoy stared down at Chuck for a long moment. When he spoke again, his words struck an odd, formalistic note in Chuck's fevered brain.

"It is regrettable," said the envoy, "that you are no longer in perfect health."

And he turned away, and disappeared. Above Chuck's straining eyes, the edges of the hole and the little patch of sky beyond them tilted, spun about like a scene painted on a whirling disk, and shredded away into nothingness.

At some time during succeeding events he woke up again; but nothing was really clear or certain until he found himself looking up into the face of Doc Burgis, who was standing over him, with a finger on his pulse.

"How do you feel?" said Burgis.

"I don't know," said Chuck. "Where am I?"

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"Back at Base," said Burgis, letting go of his wrist. "Your leg is knitting nicely and we've knocked out your pneumonia. You've been under sedation. A couple more days' rest and you'll be ready to run again."

"That's nice," said Chuck; and went back to sleep.

V

Three days later he was recovered enough to take a ride in his motorized go-cart over to Roy Marlie's office. He found Roy there, and his uncle.

"Hi, Tommy," said Chuck, wheeling through the door. "Hi, chief."

"How you doing, son?" asked Member Thomas Wagnall. "How's the leg?"

"Doc says I can start getting around on surgical splints in a day or two." Chuck looked at them both. "Well, isn't anybody going to tell me what happened?"

"Those two natives were carrying you when we finally located the three of you," said Tommy, "and we—"

"They were?" said Chuck.

"Why, yes," Tommy looked closely at him. "Didn't you know that?"

"I—I was unconscious before they started carrying me, I guess," said Chuck.

"At any rate, we got you all back here in good shape." Tommy went across the room to a built-in cabinet and came back carrying a bottle of scotch, capped with three glasses, and a bowl of ice. "Ready for that drink now?"

"Try me," said Chuck, not quite licking his lips. Tommy made a second trip for charged water and brought it back. He passed the drinks around.

"How," he said, raising his glass. They all drank in appreciative silence.

"Well," said Tommy, setting his glass down on the top of Roy's desk, "I suppose you heard about the conference." Chuck glanced over at Roy, who was evincing a polite interest.

"I heard they had a brief meeting and put everything off for a while," said Chuck.

"Until they had a chance to talk things over *between themselves*, yes," said Tommy. He was watching his nephew somewhat closely. "Rather surprising development. We hardly know where we stand now, do we?"

"Oh, I guess it'll work out all right," said Chuck.

"You do?"

"Why yes," said Chuck. He slowly sipped at his glass again and held it up to the light of the window. "Good scotch."

"*All right!*" Tommy's thick fist came down with a sudden bang on the desk top. "I'll quit playing around. I may be nothing but a chairside Earth-lubber, but I'll

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tell you one thing. There's one thing I've developed in twenty years of politics and that's a nose for smells. And something about this situation smells! I don't know what, but it smells. And I want to find out what it is."

Chuck and Roy looked at each other.

"Why, Member," said Roy. "I don't follow you."

"You follow me all right," said Tommy. He took a gulp from his glass and blew out an angry breath. "All right—off the record. But tell me!"

Roy smiled.

"You tell him, Chuck," he said.

Chuck grinned in his turn.

"Well, I'll put it this way, Tommy," he said. "You remember how I explained the story about Big Brother Charlie that gave us the name for this project?"

"What about it?" said the Member.

"Maybe I didn't go into quite enough detail. You see," said Chuck, "the two youngest brothers were twins who lived right next door to each other in one town. They used to fight regularly until their wives got fed up with it. And when that happened, their wives would invite Big Brother Charlie from the next town to come and visit them."

Tommy was watching him with narrowed eyes.

"What happened, of course," said Chuck, lifting his glass again, "was that after about a week, the twins weren't fighting each other at all." He drank.

"All right. All right," said Tommy. "I'll play straight man. Why weren't they fighting with each other?"

"Because," said Chuck, putting his glass back down again, "they were both too busy fighting with Big Brother Charlie."

Tommy stared for a long moment. Then he grunted and sat back in his chair, as if he had just had the wind knocked out of him.

"You see," said Roy, leaning forward over his desk, "what we were required to do here was something impossible. You just *don't* change centuries-old attitudes of distrust and hatred overnight. Trying to get the Lugh and the Tomah to like each other by any pressures we could bring to bear was like trying to move mountains with toothpicks. Too much mass for too little leverage. But we *could* change the attitudes of both of them toward us."

"And what's that supposed to mean?" demanded Tommy, glaring at him.

"Why, we might—and did—arrange for them to find out that, like the twins, they had more in common with each other than either one of them had with Big Brother Charlie. Not that we wanted them, God forbid, to unite in actively *fighting* Big Brother:

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we do need this planet as a space depot. But we wanted to make them see that they two form one unit—with us on the outside. They don't like each other any better now, but they've begun to discover a reason for hanging together."

"I'm not sure I follow you," said Tommy, dryly.

"What I'm telling you," said Roy, "is that we arranged a demonstration to bring home to them the present situation. They weren't prepared to share this world with each other. But when it came to their both sharing it with a third life form, they began to realize that the closer relative might see more eye-to-eye with them than the distant one. Chuck was under strict orders not to intervene, but to manage things so that each of them would be forced to solve the problems of the other, with no assistance from Earth or its technology."

"Brother," Chuck grunted, "the way it all worked out I didn't have to 'manage' a thing. The 'accident' was more thorough than we'd planned, and I was pretty much without the assistance of our glorious technology myself. Each of them had problems I couldn't have solved if I'd wanted to . . . but the other one could."

"Well," Roy nodded, "they are the natives, after all. We are the aliens. Just *how* alien, it was Chuck's job to demonstrate."

"You mean—" exploded Tommy. "That you threw away a half-million dollar vehicle — that you made that crash-landing in the ocean—on purpose!"

"Off the record, Tommy," said Chuck, holding up a reminding finger. "As for the pot, it's on an undersea peak in forty fathoms. As soon as you can get us some more equipment it'll be duck soup to salvage it."

"Off the record be hanged!" roared Tommy. "Why, you might have killed them. You might have had one or the other species up in arms! You might—"

"We thought it was worth the risk," said Chuck mildly. "After all, remember I was sticking my own neck into the same dangers."

"You thought!" Tommy turned a seething glance on his nephew. He thrust himself out of his chair and stamped up and down the office in a visible effort to control his temper.

"Progress is not made by rules alone," misquoted Chuck complacently, draining the last scotch out of his glass. "Come back and sit down, Tommy. It's all over now."

The older man came glowering back and wearily plumped in his chair.

"All right," he said. "I said off the record, but I didn't expect this. Do you two realize what it is you've just done? Risked the lives of two vital members of an

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intelligent race necessary to our future! Violated every principle of ordinary diplomacy in a hair-brained scheme that had nothing more than a wild notion to back it up! And to top it off, involved me—*me,* a Member of the Government! If this comes out nobody will ever believe I didn't know about it!"

"All right, Tommy," said Chuck. "We hear you. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Earth District Member 439 Thomas L. Wagnall blew out a furious breath.

"Nothing!" he said, violently. "Nothing."

"That's what I thought," said Chuck. "Pass the scotch."

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Wanted: a new name, or even a new word, to describe F&SF's occasional "specials," those stories which—like Theodore Sturgeon's And Now the News . . . *(December, 1956) or Shirley Jackson's* The Missing Girl *(December, 1957)—are not, strictly speaking, either fantasy or science fiction, but simply strange stories, commercially unsuited to virtually any other market. This is, I suppose, a request for a means of classifying what is in its very nature unclassifiable; but it would be handy to have a term for such off-beat stories, fascinatingly unconventional as narratives, deeply suggestive as symbolic accounts of human behavior, which will continue to turn up here once or twice a year when they come from writers as irresistibly skillful as Miss Jackson or Mr. Sturgeon . . . or F&SF's latest newcomer, Mrs. Reed.*

The Reign of Tarquin the Tall

by KIT REED

WE ALL THOUGHT TARQUIN WAS kidding when he said he was going to be king. Sure he was older than the rest of us, and it was his house, but it sounded like a gag, or just one more thing, like Lukey and the ants.

Lukey has one of those ant palaces with the glass and the hills and the passages you can watch through the side. Somehow he was never satisfied with the ant palace the way it came from the factory, so he took it apart and made palazzos for the ants and turned those little ant-passages into streets, just like a little village. Then he poured the ants in but he didn't like the way they behaved, so he shook 'em all out onto a hot griddle and later he shellacked 'em. Now those ants do everything Lukey tells them. He says what he's got is a microcosm of the world, and if he doesn't like the way things are going, he's going to take an ax and destroy the whole thing—and when he does, the world will go too, under some bigger ax. Each morning he goes out and looks at the paper. Then if there's

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been a murder or some carryings-on in the Balkans or a riot in the East, he stamps in and thunders "YOUR TIME HAS COME, WORLD," and brandishes his ax at the ant palace until somebody goes in and pleads with him to spare us.

In the beginning, we thought Tarquin's thing was like Lukey and the ant palace. Tarquin has always told us that his house is our house and that we can do anything we want under his roof. No other landlord would let Martin and Leroy carry on about their spaceship the way they do. Tarquin's house may be his castle, but it's the mother ship to the Merton twins. Leroy straps himself in his desk chair and fiddles with his ruler and his inkwell until Martin comes in. Then he says "Ready to take off, Skipper?" and Martin says "Time for countdown." Then they start the countdown. Martin fiddles around with the launching platform, which is somewhere on the shag rug by the night table. Then he straps himself into his desk chair (oh, pardon me—ejector anti-grav seat) and says "Ready roto-jet one." Leroy says "Ready roto-jet one." Martin says "Check air pressure." Leroy says "Check air pressure." Martin says "Ready roto-jet two." Leroy says "Ready roto-jet two" and so on, until finally Martin shouts "BLAST OFF" and they blast off. They keep it up for hours, until finally they land on another planet and put on their space suits ("up antenna, up antenna"). Then they come downstairs to inspect the natives, which is Twig, who really gets very mad at the game. They get around to investigating local flora and fauna around mealtimes—you have to have a lot of specimens in the space game.

As I said, Tark always said we could do anything we wanted under his roof. He was always pretty nice to all of us. Nobody in town had paid much attention to him until old Mr. and Mrs. Stewart died, and then everybody and his neighbor learned that the old couple had left their whole great house to their only grandchild, Tark. I suppose they knew what they were doing.

Once Tark owned the house for himself, people began to collect. Lukey was a fair basketball player who earned his living playing third-rate ball in fourth-rate towns until his legs began to go. He was doing pretty well in town as an ex-pro, coaching the kids and all, until one day he met Tark and went up to the house to live with him. First thing he did when he moved in, Tark says, was to buy the ant palace. He started collecting unemployment money not long afterward.

Martin and Leroy had just quit school when they met Tark. That was about the time his grand-

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parents left him the house and people began to realize who Tarquin Stewart was. The twins were downtown at Luther's, holding an Emancipation Celebration because they'd just passed the legal school age, when Tarquin walked in and asked them what they were going to do next. They make a pretty good living down at the docks when the shrimpers come in. Up until recently Tark needed their money to keep the house going.

I think I moved in because I liked Tark from the first. I used to know him in school. I guess I'm the only person who knows he used to go down onto the crumbling dock in the marsh flats and try to fly. We used to go together. He'd make little runs and soaring jumps. I never tried that. I'd just lie on my back on the dock with my eyes closed tight enough to bring pictures to the insides of my lids, and every once in a while I'd try to levitate.

I never watched Tark to see whether he flew and he was too busy trying to get into the air to watch whether I made it up off the dock or not, so we got along fine. When we pretended we were tired of it, we'd talk. We tried to think of the most magnificent thing we'd ever imagined. Mine was an endless mansion with corridors where you could walk forever and never come to the end. Tark's was Roman, the biggest pleasure barge of all, a place where things too beautiful to think about were done just to please him. I think we were both remembering the talks, a little, when Tark asked me to come live with him and I said yes.

Twig came with Doreen. Their mother was dead and the aunt who had them said she just didn't feel like keeping them any more. I never knew people did that until I met Twig and Doreen. They're only 11 and 10, but Doreen's aunt had her done up in one of those turquoise nylon sweaters that's begun to curdle under the arms and a short pleated skirt and patent-leather shoes and white socks. As soon as she found out she was going to be living with us for good, Doreen took a wet comb and got rid of the frizzy curls her aunt had made and scraped off the cheesy lipstick the old lady had put on her when she'd sent the kids over. Then she asked us to call her Dor and we did.

We kept Tark's big old house neat and sweet and managed to keep Mr. Buttery from the welfare office off our heels. He kept nosing around because he thought Tark didn't have any right to Twig and Dor and the twins. He was right, but we had things so spruced up and the kids so clean and busy that he never got a chance to file a petition.

That's one of the things that

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made me uneasy about Tark and this king thing. If Mr. Buttery came around on one of his inspection trips and saw what was going on, we might lose the kids.

Tark didn't really say he was going to be king. He came downstairs on his birthday and stood on the landing and cleared his throat until we all came out into the hall. He had on a shirt and suit of pale lavender, and his hands were still stained as if he'd just finished a session with the clothes and some very cheap purple dye.

"I have just attained my twenty-fifth birthday," he said, and then he swept his hand behind him as if he were moving an ermine cloak around and started down the rest of the stairs. "I have attained my fiduciary majority." The twins looked baffled. Twig, who reads a lot for a boy of 11, gave a faint cheer.

"Now," Tark moved into the front hall. "I can begin to make this house everything I have wanted. From now on you may call me Tarquinus Primus et Ultimus."

"Aw, Tark, that's a lot for a little kid to remember." I tried to jolly him.

"Bill . . ." He looked ominous. For a minute I forgot about the wrinkled suit and the purple dye because he looked just as regal as he wanted to be.

"Tarquinus Primus et Ultimus," Dor and Twig said in chorus, and they bowed and scraped. Those kids love games.

The twins upped their antennas and stepped forward to do homage. Lukey gave a regretful look toward his ant palace—he'd been in the middle of a revolution—and did a little pratfall on the hall rug.

"Anything you say, Tark," he said.

Tark grinned. "In honor of my birthday," he said, "I declare this a legal holiday." We all cheered this time. "Root beer floats for all." He led the parade of us out to the kitchen and pulled a cloth cover off a brand new Waring blender, just as proud as an emperor unveiling a statue. On the porch, while we were giggling and carrying on over a gallon of root beer freeze, I noticed the little cups Tark had ordered from Charleston had small gold crowns on them.

There were lots of surprises after Tark came into his money. The first was a royal purple carpet for the side parlor floor. It was soft enough to swim in. When Tark was out of town, Twig used to go in and wriggle on his belly in the soft pile.

He went in one day when Tark was sitting in the gold brocade chair he'd ordered and began squirming around on the rug, like he'd done every day while Tark

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was off in town. I thought Tark would give him what for, but he just held out his hand and said, "You may rise in the presence."

This went over big with Twig, who would get down on his hands and knees and then get up and bow to Tark and then get down on his belly and start wriggling in the rug again until Tark decided it was time to let his loyal subject get to his feet. Tark tried that "you are in the presence" bit with me and I fussed about it for a little while, but he'd look at me with those pale clear eyes and pretty soon I'd be making a little bow and scraping my toe into the rug because, no matter what you said about him, there was something regal about Tarquin Stewart.

Tark loved it when the twins came downstairs to investigate a new planet. No matter where they went—Mars, Venus, Andromeda—they'd added a new part to their routine. They always stopped to make obeisance to the ruler. Tark was Tooft of Mars and Reka of Venus and Andon of Andromeda, depending on what day it was, and he was always extremely gracious to the twins, who brought gifts of beads or sweets into the presence. One day, after they'd had a good week at the dock, they came in with a small, irregular pearl.

I'll admit Dor and I didn't like the king business too well. Dor, who was studying about the colonies and the War for Independence in the fourth grade, was Tark's maid-in-waiting, which meant she had to carry his supper in to him on a tray and make deep curtseys to him. I didn't like it because I was nearly as old as Tark and I remembered when we had been a lot closer than king and subject, when I'd tried to lift myself off the dock and he'd tried to fly.

Maybe that's why I invited Delia to come live with us without even asking Tark. It was partly that and partly my thinking that it would look good to Mr. Buttery from the welfare office if we had a woman around the house to look after the kids. She was slim and dark and 30, and she'd been around. She was on the bum when I met her, and pretty sick of it. After she'd been living in our top-floor front room for a while she stopped wearing caked-up makeup and let her hair go back to natural. She was a pretty good girl. I liked her because with Delia, business was business, and since she wasn't at our place on a business trip, she forgot about it and settled down to helping to cook and trying to get Dor's hair to curl. I think Delia was glad to let business go for a while. Besides, we didn't mind at all that she carved statue after statue out of soap and potatoes and stone-hard pieces of bread. Sometimes we went up-

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stairs to admire the little town she'd made. Lukey forgot his ants for one whole day, watching Delia play with her town.

After she had made a whole set of bowing figures and brought them in to stand in a ring around Tark's chair, he accepted Delia into the presence as a senior maid-in-waiting, who had only to sit at his feet on days of state.

I don't know why I was surprised when Tark started the days of state. Once he got the golden velvet portieres for the front room, he began to spend more and more time there, sitting in his gold-brocade chair, accepting gifts from us and telling us, very grandly, that we might stand in the presence so long as our heads were no higher than his. This was pretty hard for Lukey, who was one of those long-legged guards that basketball coaches ransom souls for, but he managed it.

As I said, Tark started days of state. They began some time in April, when Twig and Martin and Leroy and I were sitting out on the front porch, watching kids throw paper airplanes off the bluff. Dor, who had been in on the rug talking to Tark, came out and stood in the doorway.

"Tarquinus Primus et Ultimus now opens his doors to his subjects," she said, waving her arms with a real flair. "The Presence awaits your presence." She giggled a little and then pushed her hand against her mouth to keep from laughing.

"Tell him we'll be in after a bit, Dor. The sun'll be dropping soon."

She quit laughing. "He says NOW."

Martin looked at Leroy. "The first intergalactic expedition must go pay tribute to the ruler before blasting off for far suns."

"It is so," Leroy said. They poked each other and grinned and started for the door. Twig got up and went after them.

I sat for a little while, watching the sky get pink.

"Hey, Bill." Twig was in the doorway. "Hey, Bill," he said in a quiet voice. "Come on."

"Tell Tark I'll be in after a bit, Twig. The sun'll be dropping soon."

"Bill, he wants you now. And he's not kidding." Twig looked pretty serious for an 11-year-old.

"Sure he's kidding, Twig. It's just like Martin and Leroy and the space ship, and Lukey and his ants. You shouldn't let him impress you so much, Twig."

"Bill, I don't think you've been paying much attention to things around here. You haven't been in there in the daytime, when he's not noticing you."

"'Course not. I have to be at the office, don't I?"

"Bill, please. . . ."

"OK, Twig. OK."

It was beginning to get dark

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in the throne room when I went in, but nobody had remembered to put on the lights. I think that was the day when we started calling the front parlor the throne room. Martin and Leroy were sitting cross-legged on the floor, to one side of Tarquin's gold-brocade throne. Dor and Twig sat on the other side and Delia sat at Tark's feet with her skirts spread around her and a couple of her soap figures standing in front of her, like guards.

Tark looked pretty impressive. He'd been wearing purple and lavender clothes around the house ever since his birthday, but that was the first time we ever saw him in brocade. He had on a deep-purple brocade suit — I'll never know who made it for him — and a short cape with the smallest twist of ermine at the throat.

He reached down to pat Delia's head and glanced at the rest of us. "Where is Lukey? Page."

Twig went and got him.

"This is the first," Tarquin said, "of the biweekly days of state. You will assemble in this room just before supper and spend an hour with me before the evening meal. Lucas!" (Lukey jumped.) "No matter how bad conditions are, the world will have regal amnesty on days of state." Lukey looked sad. He loved to do the bit where he raced up to the ant palace with the ax and waited for us to plead with him. He sighed and said very quietly, "OK, Tark."

"'M'lord,'" Tarquin corrected, but when Lukey didn't catch his sharp look, he let it ride.

Later it was M'lord this and M'lord that, and yes M'lord, but I don't think any of us were ready to realize it at the time.

After that day of state, the rest of us went into the kitchen while Delia began dinner. First thing she'd done when she'd moved in was to get rid of the cans and cans of pot-roast dinner and cases and cases of marshmallows we'd been eating from and to schedule greens at least twice a day and fresh salad at the evening meal. When she finished putting the chops in to broil, she got a caterer's box out of the refrigerator and began to make a tray for Tark.

"What's that?" Martin and Leroy were fascinated.

"Don't you know?" Twig said disdainfully. As I said, he reads a lot. "That's pheasant under glass."

Things got more and more regal from then on. Tark, who'd held a part-time job with the historical society for years and years, just quit one day. After that he spent most of his time in the throne room or walking around the house, slapping a riding stick against his leg. By that time school was out and he had the kids home all day to follow him from room to room and dance at-

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tendance on him. They never minded because he was good about letting them go swimming or boating with the other kids, and only asked that they shut up about Tarquinus Primus et Ultimus when they were out playing.

By that time, Lukey had given up collecting his unemployment checks so he and Delia, who preferred Tark's kingdom to plying her trade, were around to do pretty much what Tark wanted them to. Martin and Leroy were off at the docks every day, but pretty soon they were spending less and less time at work and more and more time around the house with Tark.

I didn't take much notice when they quit work. Summer was on its way out and I thought they wanted time to crab and go fishing and play space crew to their hearts' content. We didn't need the money—since he'd reached his "fiduciary majority" Tark had enough to support us all.

The twins took to playing spaceship more and more, but it didn't take them more than five minutes to have the countdown and blast off and ten minutes to ziff down the time warp to the new star. They spent the rest of their time doing obeisance to the ruler of the newest star, who was always Tark.

It got so I didn't like to watch the twins play any more because they were always groveling around and saying hail to Tarquin in a new language. That idea of dipping and bowing is outright undemocratic, and if Tark had been a real ruler he wouldn't have stood for it. If I'd been him, I would have established equal rights for everybody — except, maybe, on days of state.

I don't think I would have put all that money into a silver service and a set of brushes, either. Almost everything Tark ordered sent to the house those days had a golden crown and his monogram on it.

Lukey began to get a little iffish about paying honor to Tark when he realized he had less and less time to play creator over his ant palace. Sometimes he was so busy going back and forth from the throne room that he had to leave his ants right in the middle of a war or an election. It made him mad because it was hard for him to remember where he'd left off when he got back to them. He'd grumble when Tark would call him in to entertain him (Lukey played a sweet guitar, and Tark made him court minstrel), but he'd be all smiles when Tark would put out his hand in that really regal way he had and say "Lucas, you may rise."

The night Tarquin made me Chancellor he used that same straight, regal gesture. It was an impressive thing. He called me in at the end of a day of state,

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when Delia and the twins were doing dishes, Lukey was saying dark things over his ant palace, and the kids, Twig and Dor, were out in the garden working off steam.

It was still a little light outside, but the throne room curtains were drawn almost to and Tark hadn't let us light the golden brazier he'd ordered from an antique shop in Charleston to stand beside his throne.

"Wilfred." Tark's voice had gotten strong and quiet in the months since he had become king. He looked taller.

"Whuh?" For a minute I forgot he meant me. Nobody has called me Wilfred since I used to get sent to the cloak room in the third grade.

"Kneel, Wilfred."

"Yes, M'lord." Tark hated it when anybody gave him an argument. He's right about that, really—nobody should argue with the king—so I knelt down.

"From now on you will drop your petty job with another state and become my Chancellor." He got up off his throne and put something over my shoulders. It was a key on a heavy gold chain. "You will attend to my affairs here."

"Yes, M'lord."

You know, it didn't occur to me until I was packing sandwiches in my lunch pail the next morning that Tark had gotten me to promise to give up my job.

For the first few days I was around home, I fretted a lot. I got a little sick of seeing Twig and Dor and Lukey and the twins and Delia going in and out of the front parlor, bobbing up and down, doing this for Tark and that for Tark.

Then Tark began to show me my duties and things were more interesting. He had me out every morning drilling the army, Lukey and the twins. He said Mr. Buttery had been to call one evening while we were out playing croquet, and Mr. Buttery was beginning to make threatening noises about taking the twins. I didn't have the heart to tell Tark he wouldn't hear a thing from the welfare office if he'd greet Mr. Buttery on the front porch or in the hall instead of ushering him into the throne room. On second thought, even if Tark had talked to him in the yard, Mr. Buttery couldn't have missed thinking there was something funny about the purple suit.

Mr. Buttery was what got us started on the army. Tarquin said there might come a time when we would have to fight to keep Twig and little Dor, and we had to be ready. He had me build up the arsenal in the coal cellar, and one of my duties was to see that Lukey went down at least once a week and cleaned the guns.

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I really kept things going, if I do say so. Tark was so busy letting the rest of his subjects pay court to him that he didn't have much time to keep things running. I drilled the army and ordered the groceries and took care of Tark's drafts from the bank. I think in these days and times a ruler has to be a lot more than a fine-looking figurehead.

If the twins hadn't had to start back to school, we probably would have gone along under the rule of Tarquin the Tall for years. As it was, Tark sent them off to classes the first day in September with new book bags and a fistful of milk money, with Dor all tricked out in a plaid cotton dress. He even sent Delia downtown with Twig to see that he had some new trousers for the first day of school, and he let Lukey and the twins walk the kids as far as the corner. About lunchtime, though, he began to get a little jumpy and stand-offish. He was used to having Twig come in and tell him shaggy dog stories, and he missed having Dor around to fetch and tote. By two o'clock, he'd sent Lukey up to the school to be sure the kids came right home as soon as the last bell rang, and the next day he wouldn't let them go at all.

The day the truant officer came around for the first time things started going sour for Tark.

He sent me out to see the man at first but he listened through the window. When he heard me backing down, he came out in his purple suit and started saying a lot of things that weren't wise. Delia smoothed things over, telling the school man the kids had been sick, but by that time Tarquin's temper was ruined for the week.

He began letting Lukey have less and less time with his ant palace, and he wouldn't even let him rush in with the ax and yell "YOUR TIME HAS COME, WORLD" on the day of the Peking riots. Lukey began to sulk and that put the twins in a bad humor. One day they were so upset they didn't even get the mother ship off the ground. After that, I can tell you, Army drill sessions were not much fun for me. The twins got sadder and sadder and Lukey got surlier and surlier. I even had to take to cleaning the arsenal myself.

Twig and Dor weren't any too happy about having to stay home from school either. Twig told Tark outright one day that he was tired of wiggling on that rug on his belly, and Dor got so that she took twice as long as usual when you sent her to get something. I can't blame them, because their classmates from the fifth and sixth grade were coming by outside to call for them and Dorrie and Twig knew every kid in town but them was getting ready for

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the Harvest party and the Itty Bitty League games.

Delia never said much, but I found her crying more than once after Tark had gotten cross and yelled about her cooking. She took all her bowing figures out of the throne room and one day she made a rat out of one of Tark's bars of purple soap.

I didn't mind all the goings on too much, because it gave me more and more to do, keeping things running and trying to cheer Delia and the kids and keep the army from walking out on Tark. Once while Tark was upstairs taking a bath (did I tell you about the purple scented bath salts and the gold plush towel?) I tried on the thin gold headband he'd taken to wearing around August. That little bit of gold and the soft, swishy purple cape could make almost anybody feel regal. I think Tark carried it a little bit too far, though, wearing them all the time.

Trappings really ought to be saved for days of state.

After one especially rough session with the truant officer (Delia had made up chicken pox and measles, but she was about to run out of diseases to use as school excuses for the kids), Tark tried to talk to me.

"What's wrong, Bill?" he talked to me almost like he had in the early times. "Why is everything beginning to be painful?"

It was dark in the throne room again, even though the sun was still up outside. Tark had taken to closing the drapes and letting the brazier die out. He sounded honestly sad.

I really tried to tell him. I talked a lot of high-flown things about human rights and the dignity of man, and the thing I believed about a ruler—that he had to be more than somebody people could call king. I'm afraid I threw in a few things about democracy and governmental honor and maybe even freedom from oppression. Tark was listening hard and I was getting pretty fired up with all the things I ought to tell him about his reign.

When I finished, he was sitting with his head in his hands. His gold circlet fell off and began hooprolling across the rug toward me. I picked it up and hefted it for a minute—then I gave it back to him and went out to find Delia and the kids.

That night he was worse than ever. He told Delia she'd better let little Dor do the cooking from now on—canned pot roast and marshmallows were better than anything she'd done up—and he locked Lukey's ant palace into the closet under the stairs. One ruler was enough, he said. He kept the twins from going out to the movies and snapped at Dorrie and yelled at Twig. He steered

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clear of me, maybe because of some of the things I'd said to him about the ways of kings.

I'll admit I wasn't on deck when the truant officer showed up with Mr. Buttery the next morning. I didn't hear any of the scene, maybe because I was in the throne room fiddling around with Tark's velvet robes and his golden crown. It must have been pretty bad, from what Delia told me afterward.

Mr. Buttery came skittering up the walk, looking as dry and as sharp-nosed as the meanest curmudgeon on earth. The truant officer was hard on his heels, and he had that bring-'em-back-alive-or-else look on his blunt, bristly mug. They asked for Tark, and when they started beating on the door with Mr. Buttery's stick, Delia went running and came back down with Tarquin the Tall.

Delia says Tark carried the whole thing off fairly well. He strode out on the porch in that proud purple suit and stared the two of them down with that sharp-eyed regal glare. He ordered them off the porch before they had time to blink. They were halfway down the walk when they remembered what they were there for, and by that time the army had massed on the porch. Mr. Buttery got one whiff of the cleaning oil on those guns and the truant officer heard one click from the royal arsenal, and they were off down the walk like two streaks.

Mr. Buttery stopped outside the fence, though, to wave a legal paper at Tark. When he yelled his voice was very loud and very clear.

"*I will be back tonight with police. I will be back with the militia if necessary. I will get those children and I will bring them out and I will have them committed to the Commissioner of Welfare.* THEY WILL ATTEND SCHOOL. . . ." His voice faded away in an I-shall-return echo as he took off down the street to the truant officer's car.

Tark looked behind him for his army. He was about to make some royal reply but he realized he was alone on the porch and the truant officer's car was already chuffing away down the street. Maybe that's when he broke.

Maybe it was my fault. I'd been so preoccupied with readying up the throne room and fiddling with the ermine and the crown that I didn't even notice at first when Tark came in. He was full of his encounter with the welfare worker and anxiety about the kids, and I suppose it didn't help him any to see me getting the feel of that gold circlet, swishing the robe a little against the seat of his throne. Whatever he'd been about to say to me died then.

Of course I got up as soon as I realized he'd come in, but he

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didn't even try to go over to the throne. He was stopped by a gallant little row of—critters—thick on the throne room rug. He got down on his hands and knees and studied them. I didn't have to get too close to see Delia's sculptures advancing, row on row, at the head of a parade of Lukey's ants. They were all marching on the throne.

The twins came in. They'd hidden the arsenal somewhere, and they looked as if they were ashamed they'd ever touched it, even under Tark's orders. They talked to him for a minute in unison, and then turned around and lock-stepped out.

"Hail, strange ruler! We have set our course for a far-off galaxy. Farewell forever."

Tark looked stricken.

He took off his purple jacket and rolled it up in a ball and stuffed it under the throne. He rolled up his sleeves and opened his shirt collar. He tried not to see that I was still standing there in the cape, trying to pry off his crown.

"Change pants with me," he said.

I did.

He walked around the throne room for a minute, touching the portieres sadly, running fingers over the gold-brocade throne. He put his hand on my shoulder (I'd taken the cape off by now and crammed it in the window-seat).

"Tell them I tried," he said.

When the authorities came back that night we convinced them it had all been a joke. The twins got off in town court with probation, because the guns were licensed. Lukey got 30 days suspended. The kids went back to school. Days passed and weeks went, and it was late fall before we heard from Tark again.

We got a package in the mail one day. It was postmarked Jacksonville and it had the address of some penny arcade on the corner. In it were three of those records you can get for 50 cents—those Cord-A-Voice records you can make on boardwalks in little booths. There was a card with them: ABDICATION SPEECH OF TARQUIN THE TALL.

That night before supper we got together in the room with the purple rug and heard them all.

In all the turmoil of the desperate days before my departure, I, Tarquinus Stewart, rex, was unable to say to you, my people, all that was in my heart at that time. Now, as your sovereign, I come before you to say those things which you as my subjects have a right to know. It took much searching of soul and deep examination of heart to . . . [The recording machine must have gotten scratching here, and all that came across on the record was what sounded like a group

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of kids singing a ragtime tune. It staticked and popped and finally Twig got up and changed the record.] . . . *will all be provided for* . . . [more scratching] . . . *legal stipulation for your care . . . certain amount of money remitted to you, in Wilfred's care, each . . . I shall no longer need* . . . [Twig put on the last record.] . . . *was with heavy heart and highest wishes for your welfare that I made the decision. To you, my people, I announce my abdication in favor of* . . . [scratching again. We played that part twice, but it never came any clearer.]

After we listened to all of Tarquin's speech, I declared a day of state especially in his honor. Delia made a rum cake and the twins moved my throne out to a place of comfort in the back yard.

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It is almost unbelievable that a Jules Verne story can have remained untranslated for 71 years; but this publication of Gil Braltar *is the first appearance in English of one of the Master's most amusing imaginative satires. The story first came out as a makeweight to fill out the bulk of* LE CHEMIN DE FRANCE *(1887), an historical novel about the efforts of German "counter-revolutionary" troops to reestablish the monarchy after the French Revolution; when* THE FLIGHT TO FRANCE *appeared in English, the short filler was omitted. Long out of print and unavailable even in France, this may well be the least known of all Verne's tales; but I think you'll find it a lively bit of foolishment, emphasizing the fact that Verne was as much a humorist as a prophet—and revealing for the first time the secret behind British control of the Rock of Gibraltar.*

I. O. Evans, discoverer and translator of Gil Braltar, *has recently established himself as the foremost Verne enthusiast and authority in our language. His anthology* JULES VERNE: MASTER OF SCIENCE FICTION *(Rinehart, 1957) belongs on the shelves of every scholar in s.f.; even more welcome to the general reader should be his Fitzroy edition of Verne (London: Bernard Hanison) which will bring back into print the most desirable and unobtainable of the* VOYAGES EXTRAORDINAIRES *at the rate of six a year, starting this fall with* A FLOATING CITY, THE BEGUM'S FORTUNE *and* FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON.

Gil Braltar

by JULES VERNE

(*translated by* I. O. Evans)

THERE WERE SEVEN OR EIGHT HUNdred of them at least. Of medium height, but strong, agile, supple, framed to make prodigious bounds, they gamboled in the last rays of the sun, now setting over the mountains which formed serried ridges westward of the roadstead. Its reddish disc would soon disappear, and darkness was already falling in the midst of that basin surrounded by the distant Sierras of Sanorre and Ronda and by the desolate country of Cuervo.

Suddenly all the band became motionless. Their leader had just appeared on the crest resembling the back of a skinny mule which

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forms the top of the mountain. From the military post perched on the distant summit of the great Rock nothing could be seen of what was taking place under the trees.

"*Sriss. . . . Sriss*"—they heard their leader whose lips, thrust forward like a hen's beak, gave that whistle an extraordinary intensity.

"*Sriss. . . . Sriss*"—the strange army repeated the call in perfect unison.

A remarkable being that leader: tall in height, clad in a monkey's skin with the fur outwards, his head shaggy with unkempt hair, his face bristling with a short beard, his feet bare, their soles as hard as a horse's hoof.

He lifted his hand and extended it towards the lower crest of the mountain. All simultaneously repeated that gesture with a military—or rather with a mechanical—precision, as though they were marionettes moved by the same spring. He lowered his arm. They lowered their arms. He bent towards the ground. They bent down in the same attitude. He picked up a stick and waved it about. They waved their sticks in windmill fashion like his.

Then the leader turned: gliding into the bushes, he crawled between the trees. The troop crawled after him.

In less than ten minutes they were descending the rain-worn mountain paths, but not even the movement of a pebble would have disclosed the presence of that army on the march.

In a quarter of an hour the leader halted: they halted as though frozen to the ground.

Two hundred yards below them appeared the town, stretched along the length of the roadstead, with numerous lights revealing the confused mass of piers, houses, villas, barracks. Beyond, the riding-lights of the warships, merchant-vessels, pontoons, anchored out at sea, were reflected from the surface of the still water. Farther beyond, the lighthouse projected its beams.

At that moment there sounded a cannon, the "first gunfire," discharged from one of the concealed batteries. Then could also be heard the rolling of drums and the shrill sound of the fifes.

This was the hour of Retreat, the hour to go indoors: no stranger had the right thereafter to move about the town without being escorted by an officer of the Garrison. It was the hour for the crews to go aboard their ships. Every quarter of an hour the patrols took to the guardroom the stragglers and the drunks. Then all was silent.

General MacKackmale could sleep with both eyes shut.

It seemed that England had nothing to fear, that night, for the Rock of Gibraltar.

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II

Everybody knows that formidable Rock. It somewhat resembles an enormous crouching lion, its head towards Spain, its tail dipping into the sea. Its face discloses teeth—seven hundred cannon pointing from the casemates —"an old woman's teeth," as they are called, but those of an old woman who can bite if she is attacked.

Thus England is firmly placed here, as she is at Aden, Malta, and Hong Kong, on cliffs which, aided by the progress of mechanization, she will someday convert into revolving fortresses.

Meanwhile Gibraltar assures to the United Kingdom the incontestable domination of the fifteen miles of that Strait which the club of Hercules struck open in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea between Abyla and Calpe.

Have the Spanish given up the idea of regaining their Peninsula? Unquestionably, for it seems to be impregnable by land and by sea.

But there was someone who cherished the idea of reconquering this fragment of their Peninsula. It was the leader of the band, a strange being—or perhaps rather a madman. This hidalgo bore the name of Gil Braltar, a name which, to his mind at least, had predestined him to that patriotic conquest. His reason had not been able to resist it, and his place should have been in a mental home. He was well known, but for ten years nobody knew what had become of him. Had he happened to wander off into the outer world? In fact, he had not left his ancestral home: he lived there like a cave man in the woods, in the caverns, and especially in the unexplored depths of the Cave of San Miguel which, it was reputed, led right down to the sea. He was thought of as dead. He was still alive, none the less, after the style of a savage, bereft of human reason, and obeying only his animal instincts.

III

He slept well, did General MacKackmale, with both eyes shut, though longer than was permitted by regulations. With his long arms, his round eyes deeply set under their beetling brows, his face embellished with a stubbly beard, his grimaces, his semi-human gestures, the extraordinary jutting-out of his jaw, he was remarkably ugly, even for an English general. Something of a monkey but an excellent soldier nevertheless, in spite of his apelike appearance.

Yes, he slept in his comfortable apartments on Waterport Street, that winding road which traverses the town from the Waterport Gate to the Alameda Gate. Was he perhaps dreaming that England

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would seize Egypt, Turkey, Holland, Afghanistan, the Sudan, the Boer Republics—in short every part of the globe at her convenience? And this at the very moment when she was in danger of losing Gibraltar!

The door of his bedroom opened with a crash.

"What's up?" shouted the General, sitting erect with a bound.

"Sir," replied the aide-de-camp who had just burst in like a bombshell, "the town has been invaded!"

"The Spanish?"

"Presumably, sir."

"They have dared—"

The General did not complete his sentence. He got up, wrenched off the nightcap which adorned his head, jumped into his trousers, pulled on his cloak, slid down into his boots, clapped on his helmet and buckled on his sword even while saying: "What's that racket I can hear?"

"It's the clatter of lumps of rock falling like an avalanche on the town."

"Then there's a lot of them?"

"Yes, sir, there must be."

"Then all the bandits of the coast must have joined forces to take us by surprise—the smugglers of Ronda, the fishermen of San Roque, the refugees who are swarming in the villages?"

"Yes, sir, I'm afraid so."

"Well, has the Governor been warned?"

"No, sir; we can't possibly get through to his residence on Europa Point. The gates have been seized, and the streets are full of the enemy."

"What about the barracks at the Waterport Gate?"

"We can't possibly get there either. The gunners must have been locked up in their barracks."

"How many men have you got with you?"

"About twenty, sir—men of the Third Regiment who have been able to get away."

"By Saint Dunstan!" shouted General MacKackmale. "Gibraltar taken from England by those —those—orange-vendors! It's not going to happen! No! It shan't!"

At that very instant the bedroom door opened, to admit a strange being who jumped on to the General's shoulders.

IV

"Surrender!" he howled in raucous tones which sounded more like the roar of a beast than like a human voice.

Several men, who had entered with the aide-de-camp, were about to throw themselves on that being when, seeing him by the light of the room, they recoiled.

"Gil Braltar!" they cried.

It was indeed that hidalgo whom nobody had seen for a long time—that savage from the caves of San Miguel.

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"Will you surrender?" he howled.

"Never!" replied General MacKackmale.

Suddenly, just as the soldiers were surrounding him, Gil Braltar emitted a prolonged and shrill "*Sriss.*" At once the courtyard of the house, and then the house itself, were filled with an invading army.

Could it be credible! They were monkeys, they were apes—hundreds of them! They had come to seize from the English that Rock of which they themselves are the true owners, that hill on which they had dwelt even before the Spanish, and certainly long before Cromwell had dreamed of conquering it for Britain.*

Yes, indeed it was! And their numbers made them formidable, these tailless apes with whom one could live on good terms only by tolerating their thieving; those cunning and audacious beasts whom one took care not to molest because they revenged themselves by rolling enormous rocks on the town.

And now these apes had become an army led by a madman as fierce as themselves—by this Gil Braltar whom they knew, who shared their independent life. They were the soldiers of this four-legged William Tell whose whole existence was devoted to the one idea—to drive the foreigners from Spanish soil!

What a disgrace for the United Kingdom if the attempt succeeded! The English, conquerors of the Hindoos, of the Abyssinians, of the Tasmanians, of the Australian Blackfellows, and of so many others, to be overcome by mere apes!

If such a catastrophe took place, all that General MacKackmale could do would be to blow out his brains. He could never survive such a dishonor.

However, before the apes whom their leader's whistle had summoned had entered the room, a few of the soldiers had been able to throw themselves upon Gil Braltar. The madman, endowed with superhuman strength, struggled, and only after great difficulty was he overcome. The monkey skin which he had borrowed had fallen from his head, and he was thrust into a corner almost naked, gagged, bound, unable to move or to utter a cry. A little later General MacKackmale rushed from the house resolved, in the best military tradition, to conquer or die.

The danger was no less outside. A few of the soldiers had been able to rally, probably at the Waterport Gate, and were ad-

*I have less information than M. Verne on the dreams of Cromwell, who died in 1658; but Gibraltar was conquered, in 1704, in the name of Queen Anne—much to the surprise of Charles, archduke of Austria, who believed that the English were fighting the War of the Spanish Succession on his behalf.—A.B.

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vancing towards the General's house, and a few shots could be heard in Waterport Street and the market-place. Nonetheless, so great was the number of apes that the garrison of Gibraltar was in danger of being forced to abandon the place. And then, if the Spaniards made common cause with the monkeys, the forts would be abandoned, the batteries deserted, and the fortifications would not have a single defender.

Suddenly the situation was completely changed.

Indeed, in the torchlight the apes could be seen beating a retreat. At their head marched their leader, brandishing his stick. And all, copying the movements of his arms and legs, were following him at the same speed.

Then had Gil Braltar been able to free himself from his bonds, to escape from that room where he had been imprisoned? It could not be doubted. But where was he going now? Was he going towards Europa Point, to the Residence of the Governor, to attack him and call on him to surrender?

The madman and his army descended Waterport Street. Then, having passed the Alameda Gate, they set off obliquely across the Park and up the slopes.

An hour later, not one of the invaders of Gibraltar remained.

Then what had happened?

This was disclosed later, when General MacKackmale appeared on the edge of the Park.

It was he who, taking the madman's place, had directed the retreat of that army after having wrapped himself up in the monkey skin. So much did he resemble an ape, that gallant warrior, that he had deceived the monkeys themselves. So he had only to appear for them to follow him.

It was indeed the idea of a genius, and it well merited the award to him of the Cross of the Order of St. George.

As for Gil Braltar, the United Kingdom gave him, for cash down, to a Barnum, who soon made his fortune exhibiting him in the towns of the Old and the New World. He even let it be supposed, that Barnum, that it was not the Wild Man of San Miguel whom he was exhibiting, but General MacKackmale himself.

The episode had certainly been a lesson for the government of Her Gracious Majesty. They realized that if Gibraltar could not be taken by man it was at the mercy of the apes. And that is why England, always practical, decided that in future it would send to the Rock only the ugliest of its generals, so that the monkeys could be deceived again.

This simple precaution will secure it for ever the ownership of Gibraltar.

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This time it is Mildred Clingerman who takes up the classic theme of the Thimg Shop—the little place with an off-and-on existence, where one may make unpredictable purchases—and employs it (plus a liberal dash of her special charm) to demonstrate that an obscure instance of time travel may mean nothing, not even a minor paradox, to the world at large, but everything to a girl who sensed that something queer had happened to time even before she was born.

The Day of the Green Velvet Cloak

by MILDRED CLINGERMAN

EXACTLY ONE WEEK BEFORE SHE was to be married to Mr. Hubert Lotzenhiser, owner of the Fast and Friendly Loan Company, Mavis O'Hanlon went shopping and, among other things, bought a very expensive mistake. She knew it was a mistake the moment the saleslady counted out the meager change from two fifty-dollar bills—almost the last of Mavis' savings. Still, the green velvet cloak was quite the loveliest mistake Mavis had ever made. For instance, it in no way resembled Hubert, her biggest mistake to date.

Mavis, weaving her way through the crowded department store aisles, glanced briefly in the direction of the exchange desk, then down at the smart box that held the green velvet cloak. No, it was impossible. As usual, the very thought of approaching the exchange desk turned her knees to jelly and set ten thousand butterflies to panic flight in her stomach. Mavis knew very well what Hubert would say of such timid behavior, if he were to find out about it. (She certainly had no intention of telling him.) In the six years of their engagement Hubert had devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to what he called "fibering-up" Mavis' character. She had been subjected to many long, dull lectures on the advantages of self-discipline, which, so far as Mavis could see, consisted chiefly in

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forcing herself to do all the things she most disliked so that she could turn out to be exactly like Hubert.

Under Hubert's tutelage Mavis had shudderingly tried pot-gardening, dog-patting, and automobile-driving. She was miserable. She balked the night Hubert came to dinner in her apartment and insisted she pursue and kill the two cockroaches the grocer had sacked with the potatoes. She grew so heady with her rebellion that night that she almost broke the engagement. In fact, she was triumphantly convinced she had, till Hubert showed up the next night and overwhelmed her with his bland assumption that all was well. It was all so difficult. She could not clearly recall how she had come to be engaged to Hubert in the first place. Fortunately, Hubert's excessively cautious nature had demanded a long engagement. Unfortunately, the long engagement period was now drawing to a close, and Mavis found it more and more difficult to tell Hubert what a big mistake he was.

After the night of the cockroaches, Mavis had given up her role of the grim quarry slave scourged to her dungeon and gone happily back to being her old chicken-hearted, unfibered self. Now she wished she hadn't. If Hubert's character-building had succeeded, how simple it would be now to tell him (in effect) that she was turning him in at the exchange desk! (But for whom could she exchange him?)

That was a fruitless line of thought. Especially since she couldn't even bring herself to exchange a perfectly useless (but perfectly beautiful) green velvet cloak—which no power on earth could induce her to wear in public, even supposing she should ever have occasion for wearing it. It was impossible to picture herself garbed in the long Victorian garment, sailing into some night-club on Hubert's arm. Mavis hadn't the courage to bring it off, for one thing. For another, it demanded an escort as unlike Hubert as was humanly possible.

When she left the department store, Mavis headed straight for the Book Nook. After mentally wrestling with two enormous mistakes she felt she deserved a small reward. In Mavis' opinion chicken-hearted people were frequently in need of small rewards —for the things they did and the things they did not do, for success and failure, for joy and despair, and for all in-betweenness.

When she could find it the Book Nook was her favorite second-hand bookstore, and second-hand books were her favorite small rewards. The place was a narrow, dark cave sandwiched between a real-estate office and a surgical-supply shop. She was never quite certain of the address. Sometimes,

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when it had been months since her last visit, she would return to find that the real-estate office had unaccountably changed into a cubbyhole that sold sneeze powder and exploding cigars; and when she turned into what ought to have been the Book Nook, she ended in a nightmare of trusses, bedpans, and menacing garments with a lot of dangling harness attached.

But on the day of the green cloak the real-estate office displayed its usual ugly photographs of property nobody wanted, while the surgical-supply shop offered a choice of legs or crutches, and she found the Book Nook huddled between them.

There was a new proprietor in charge. But then, there often was. At first glance she found him a vast improvement over his predecessors, though this one was badly in need of a shave. Still, the new man was young and he didn't have a cold. Till then it had been Mavis' experience that all second-hand booksellers suffered from heavy colds and a startling resemblance to stone images squatting on ancient tombs. This one, however, went so far as to raise his head, blink his eyes, and glance pleasantly (if vaguely) in her direction.

Proceeding carefully in the half-gloom, Mavis eased her way into the old-books section, which in places like the Book Nook mostly meant nineteenth-century trash. After a grubby half hour she emerged with a prize: a chatty description of a European tour made by a wealthy American girl in the year 1877. Mavis had once known a man who collected cigarette lighters that looked like guns or miniature bottles or outdoor privies—he didn't care, just so they in no way resembled cigarette lighters. *Live and let live,* Mavis thought. Cigarette lighters held no charms for her, but Victorian travel journals did. Like most collectors she began with sheer greed, trying to cover too much territory, and ended with despair and not enough money. For some time now, she had limited herself to feminine journals that spanned (roughly) the years between 1850 and 1900. As for why she ever began collecting them at all . . . Hubert had asked her that. She had tried answering him with the truth: that people do not live by reason alone—that they only make up reasons to stop other people asking silly questions.

Hubert wasn't pleased with her answer at all, at all. In the end she was forced to retreat behind the conversation-killing remark that history was fascinating. Even Hubert respected history.

When she brought the book to the new proprietor's desk, he blew the dust from it and leafed through it while Mavis waited

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with money in one hand and tried to steady her small mountain of packages with the other.

"It's marked seventy-five cents," she said. "Right there, on the fly-leaf." She laid the money on the desk, but the young man ignored it. He was reading a page in the middle of the book. He closed the book, his finger still marking his place, and looked back to check the author's name.

"Sara . . ." he said. "Only think of Sara's keeping a journal so faithfully. It's exactly what I've been looking for. Thank you . . . thank you." He glanced up at Mavis and smiled very sweetly and went back to his reading. She stared down at the top of his head which resembled a medium grade of sheared beaver. Her feet began to hurt. Impatience always settled in Mavis' feet.

"You want to keep it?" she asked, leaning perilously forward to glare at him over her packages.

"Oh, I don't think that's necessary or even desirable. . . ." He chewed nervously at his lower lip. "But I really ought to *read* it—or anyway, part of it. Now, *here's* a nice question of ethics: If one is a time traveler and discovers in the future that one's sister's best friend has been keeping a journal that one is certain to find oneself in, how far is one allowed to read ahead? I mean, of what is to happen, but has not yet happened?" He pondered a moment while Mavis stared at him in bewilderment.

"I rather think," he continued, "that it is perfectly fair for me to read up to the point of my departure, don't you?"

"Oh, by all means," Mavis said, but her sarcasm was lost on the young man.

"Yes, here we are, steaming up the Rhine, a whole party of us." He began to read aloud from the book: "*We broke our journey at Königswinter long enough to climb up to Godesburg Castle. While strolling back T. G. kept us merry with fantastic predictions for the future. J. gaily accused him of having drunk too deeply of the wine at luncheon or of having consulted the raggletaggle gypsies who waylaid us near the castle. T. G. only laughed and shook his head. J. asked mock-scornfully if he had traveled much into the future. T. G. answered her that he wished he could, more than anything. Mrs. Simmons then exercised her authority as chaperone and begged us to cease our wild talk.* Yes," he looked up from the book and nodded at Mavis, who was standing before him with her mouth open. "That's exactly the way it was. And then we climbed the Drachenfels and afterwards floated past thirty-three crumbling castles. It must have been two days later when we reached Heidelberg. That's where I excused myself from sightseeing

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and succumbed to a bookshop." He suddenly stopped talking and fell to reading again the way a hungry man attacks his dinner.

Mavis began unloading all her packages onto the desk. He might well be crazy, but she wanted that book. Short of grappling for it, she saw no way of getting it but to wait for it. She moved around behind the desk, she took off her shoes and wiggled her toes. The Book Nook was very quiet, dark, and cool. There were no other customers. She could wait till closing time—still two hours away. Surely it would not take him that long to finish Sara's journal.

The young man paid no attention to her, other than to move his chair a few inches to allow her to squeeze in beside him. He read silently and swiftly for ten minutes, then began groping around on the desk top without lifting his eyes from the page. The hand paused as if it were surprised when it came in contact with Mavis' packages.

"I could stack them here on the floor," she said, "if they're in your way."

"Not at all. The thing is, I believe my cigar case is under them."

Together they lifted the stack. No cigars. The young man ran his hands through the medium grade of sheared beaver and looked desperate.

"Here, have a cigarette." Mavis opened her purse and handed him the package, first taking one for herself. She waited for him to light it, but when she saw that no light was forthcoming she fished out a book of matches. Only then did she glance up at his face. His eyebrows had climbed almost as high as the sheared beaver.

"Oh, I say! You . . . Well, I call it brave of you. There *are* ladies, I know, who . . . who smoke, but to do it in public and carry tobacco about with you . . . I call it brave!"

Nobody else had ever called Mavis brave. She warmed to him. But honesty was strong in her. "Millions of women smoke. Hubert hates it. But, of course you're teasing me. . . . Forgive me, but I do think you're the strangest owner the Book Nook has ever had. If you've finished with it, I'll take the book and go. The money is on the desk."

The young man lighted both cigarettes before he answered. "My dear young lady, I am not the owner of the Book Nook. There was nobody at all here when I arrived in that little alcove back there. It was pitch dark, and I slept on the floor till daylight. That was three days ago. This morning I broke the lock on the front door—the back door is boarded up and nailed solid. I took a short but nerve-racking walk and then crept back into this safe but cheerless hole. It was

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then I noticed a sign on the street side of the door. It said 'Closed till further notice.' It's still there, I believe. When you came in, I was considering, rather desperately, what I should do next. I do think it was clever of you to find exactly the book I needed! I'd been looking, but there are so many books, and all so higgledy-piggledy . . ."

Mavis stared and stared at him, while belief in him grew and grew. For the first time she noticed that his crumpled clothes were *very* Ivy League. "Are you really out of Sara's journal? I . . . I mean, how did it happen?"

"I really am, Miss—please, what is your name?" Mavis told him. "Mine is Titus Graham, and I ought this minute to be in Heidelberg, and it ought to be the year eighteen seventy-seven. I don't quite know *how* it happened, except that I went into a bookshop and I found a new book of short stories by a young German whose work I admire. He writes fantastic stories about the future, and I quite lose myself in them, you see. Only this time I lost myself indeed. I had settled myself in a little reading alcove they have there and had begun reading the book. You see, I'd fully intended to buy it and take it back to the hotel with me, till I discovered I'd left all my money in my room. Very embarrassing, but the proprietor insisted I look it over, anyway. I did, and suddenly, here I was."

"But, Mr. Graham, how will you get back?"

"Presumably by reading in *this* time something that closely relates to the *other* time."

"But will it work?"

"I . . . I hope so." The young man closed his eyes and swayed a little, as if he were suddenly dizzy. He clutched at the edge of the desk, and his teeth began to chatter. His pallor was alarming.

Mavis was on her feet at once, scrambling to put on her shoes. "What is it, Mr. Graham? Are you ill?"

"Not at all. It's just the cold in here. Don't you feel it?"

"Cold nothing!" Mavis was furious with herself. "You're starving, of course. What a witless idiot I am! No money—here three days in this dreadful honking, hooting, cruel city. Frightened, too, I'll bet! But not showing it. Oh, Mr. Graham, you are so *brave*! Here . . ." She dragged the green velvet cloak from its box. "Let me wrap you in this, and then I'll go get some food. I'll be right back." She was halfway out the door when he called to her.

"You are so kind. So very kind. When you come back, don't be alarmed if you don't find me here. I'll try reading the book in the little alcove back there. Perhaps that will help."

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"Oh, Mr. Graham, dear, take the book and *try*! Try hard, and I'll hurry."

But again his voice stopped her.

"I say . . . I know this is rather presumptuous of me, but I wonder . . . That is, I've never met a woman like you before. You didn't turn a hair when I told you about me—when I was from. I've daydreamed a great deal about the New Woman of the future, so free, so untrammeled and brave. I mean, would you—if you could—go back with me? If we tried reading the book together? I'm saying this badly, but I could take you to my sister . . . And after awhile, if you wanted to . . . Miss O'Hanlon, will you marry me in eighteen seventy-seven?"

Mavis stood in the doorway, her heart pounding. Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to go back with him—back to a time she'd fit into? Back to the long sunlit days when an hour was a whole hour long, not like these modern ten-minute hours. She knew very well from her persistent reading of Victorian journals that something queer had happened to time even before she was born. And to people. There used to be room enough in the world for all kinds of people—the inefficient, and the chicken-hearted . . . Maybe, with time enough, she could fiber-up her character in her own way. Mightn't she even, in Titus Graham's world, appear to be not only strong-fibered, but perhaps a trifle *fast*? There, she could wear the velvet cloak . . . and no more problems about Hubert. *Hubert*. He fell into her dream the way a boulder might crash into delicate glass castles. She drew herself up as tall as she could, and for the first time in her life felt little tendrils of strength lacing across her spine.

"I thank you, Mr. Graham, dear, from the bottom of my heart. I am honored, but I cannot go. You see, I have not been in this world all that you think I am. I'm a timid rabbit of a girl—not the New Woman you've imagined me to be. A poet once said, 'There grows no herb of help to heal a coward heart,' so there's no sense in my chasing through time to look for it. What I'd better do is stay here and heal myself. Anyway, I mean to try. But right now I must go get you some food."

"In spite of what you say, I should like you to know, Miss O'Hanlon, that my faith in your courage remains unshaken."

They were the last words Mavis ever heard from Titus Graham. Spoken words, that is. When she returned with the sandwiches and coffee, he was gone. In the small alcove in back she found Sara's journal, and after a short but sharp battle with her conscience,

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she gathered the book up with her packages. After all, she comforted herself, she had left the money for it on the desk. She put the sandwiches and coffee inside the box that had held the green velvet cloak and set them outside on the curb for the trash collector. Resolutely then she left the Book Nook and walked several blocks to find a telephone. Though her voice and hands were shaking, she finally managed to phone the police to tell them that someone should see to relocking the Book Nook's front door. When they asked for her name, she hung up.

Once safely at home again, Mavis gave in to fatigue and dull discontent. Something strange and wonderful had happened to her, and yet everything was discouragingly the same. She felt there ought to be some glow left, some magic light that would alter her forever. But what was different? There was still Hubert to contend with. There was still the fact that she'd spent almost all her money on the green velvet cloak. What, she wondered, had happened to it? And, oh, if she could only *know* that Mr. Graham was safely home again and no longer hungry. Her eyes fell on Sara's journal . . . *Of course!*

She found the entry almost immediately. Sara had written in Heidelberg in June, 1877:

After a frantic three days' search by our whole party and various Heidelberg officials, T. G. reappeared yesterday and set our fears at rest. He was quite unharmed, but tired and hungry and looking very seedy. None of us endeavored to question him till he had enjoyed some food and rest. Today the physician tells us that he evidently contracted a fever and in his delirium wandered about the city, in a state bordering on loss of memory. It is pitiful to think of poor T. unable to find his way back to his friends and family. The fugue, *as the doctor called it, has now passed, and we are assured he will recover fully. T. G. remembers nothing, he says, except that somewhere he met a young woman who was kind to him, giving him her cloak because he was shivering. He had it with him when he returned and will not yet permit it to be removed from his sight. He has got it firmly in his head that she was an extraordinarily beautiful and fearless creature, quite unlike any other young lady of his acquaintance. It is most provoking.*

He has always admired strong-minded females. Fortunately, I feel myself growing daily more strong-minded. . . . The cloak is of green velvet and of a quality that proves its owner (whatever her other attributes) to have been a lady of excellent taste.

For the moment, Mavis had read enough. Without at all in-

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tending to, Sara had given her enough glow to go on with. Bravely or not, Mavis could at least live her life with good taste. And it was never good taste to marry a man you didn't love. So much for Hubert. Mavis reached for the telephone and summoned him to their last meeting. While she waited for his arrival she made further plans for the future. She would continue her collection of journals. It would be delightful if now and then she ran across references to Sara and Titus. Of course, they'd marry. Or had married. Mavis hoped so; certainly she didn't mind. In fact, Mavis had no regrets at all, except when she thought of the beautiful green cloak. Never mind, Sara could have it. Mavis would save her money and buy herself another, because it hadn't been a mistake at all.

Then why, Mavis wondered, with everything so neatly ordered, did she feel like a leftover pancake in an otherwise empty refrigerator?

She was crying a little and telling herself that she would not cry when her doorbell rang. Mavis was surprised that Hubert had arrived so quickly; he wasn't due for another hour yet. The young man standing before her had hair that resembled a superior grade of sheared beaver, and in his hands he carried a package heavy with red wax seals.

"Miss Mavis O'Hanlon? May I come in? I come on a very strange errand, and it will take time to explain. Forgive me, my name is Titus Graham—Titus Graham, the Fourth, if it matters to you." He ran his hands distractedly through the sheared beaver. Mavis remembered to close her mouth—gone suddenly dry—smiled, and invited him in. When he was seated he began again. "You aren't going to believe this, but my great-grandfather—by the way, he was Titus the First. Look, I know I'm not making sense yet, but—That is, when my great-grandfather died in nineteen thirty-five, among his effects was this sealed package with a letter of instructions concerning it. The letter insisted that the package not be opened, but that in a certain year—on this very day—it should be delivered to a Miss Mavis O'Hanlon in this city. Preferably by his unmarried great-grandson, Titus Four. That's me—Oh, I told you. Yes . . . well, as a matter of fact, part of my inheritance from him was to be withheld till these conditions were fulfilled. I was pretty young when he died, but I do remember him, and I liked him very much. So, you see, aside from the rest of the inheritance, I'm pleased to do as he asked—Am I going too fast for you?"

Mavis cleared her throat and shook her head and brought out a quavery no. Titus IV was look-

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ing at her with the quality of sympathy that leads to soothings and murmurings and makes people forget they are strangers. Mavis tried to make her smile repressive but encouraging, cool but warming, hello-but-not-yet. It emerged, she was sure, as a positive leer, which she wiped off at once.

"Well, then," Titus was saying, "it was fairly easy to find you. Luckily, you are the only person of that name in the city. But now comes the hard part. In order to keep the contents of this package you must, before opening it, correctly identify what's inside. Miss O'Hanlon, I know this is silly and impossible, but can you tell me what's inside this package?"

"I can," Mavis said. (Stone-faced and unflinching before a firing squad, an investigating committee, a quizmaster, six detectives, and the income tax bureau . . . brave, cool, alert, snapping her fingers under Hubert's nose . . . waving him into Limbo: Guards! Take him away. . . .)

"Miss O'Hanlon?"

"What? Oh! The package, yes. It contains a perfectly beautiful green velvet cloak."

Titus stared at her with deepening interest. "Yes, but how did you know? Not that you wouldn't look lovely in a green velvet cloak. It's the kind of thing that would suit you very well. Oh, I don't mean you need clothes like that, or anything—That is, with or without clothes—That's not what I mean at all!" He grinned wickedly at her. "Put on the cloak, please? And get me out of this hole I've dug for myself."

Mavis broke the seals and opened the package. Somebody had done a miracle of packing, folding the cloak around soft old rolls of the finest lawn to keep the aging velvet from cracking. When she shook out the cloak the room was filled with the scent of roses and lavender, of far-off sunlit days in gardens she'd never know. Mavis smoothed the velvet with trembling fingers, then carefully drew the cloak over her shoulders. "It needs another dress," she said, "and I could lift my hair, like this."

"Do," Titus said. "And we could have dinner at that German place with paintings and red plush."

"It's hardly faded at all," Mavis murmured. "And I've got that cream-colored portrait dress I was going to be m—What time is it?"

"Oh, it's early yet. Plenty of time. I want to hear everything. How you knew what was in the package, and how—"

"No," Mavis said. "Not now. There's just time to dress and get away before—I don't believe in Last Meetings, do you?"

"Never," Titus said. "First Meetings, yes. Last Meetings, outlawed. I almost forgot; there's a message that goes with the cloak.

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Titus the First said to tell Mavis O'Hanlon: *What's past is prologue.* Does that mean anything special to you?"

"I fervently hope so." Mavis grinned back at him while sprinting for her bedroom. "Ten minutes," she called back. . . .

Time paused, as if for a deep breath, before they were caught up in it again and whirled away, so that all the hours of their life together seemed thereafter foreshortened, nostalgic, and as perfectly beautiful as the green velvet cloak.

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Ron Goulart has worked in public relations and knows something of the terrible fates which can befall a PR man. Such as being space-stranded with the Solar System's most desirable young actress . . . or a reasonable facsimile thereof.

The Katy Dialogues

by RON GOULART

KATY PRIESTLY HADN'T MADE A flic in ten years, but they didn't know that out here on Panam. The public relations fac-robot would still stir up a lot of interest for the latest showing of *Earth Is Earth, Mars Is Mars* in the stereo houses. They still had TV on Panam. The PR robot would come over great on a vague medium like that. The few slight dents wouldn't show at all.

Larson in the Jupiter office, where Ben Hollis had picked the equipment up, said the gimmick had gone over big there. Ben was sure it would work here on Panam. And, of course, so was everybody at the Biz Enterprises office in the capital.

The BE ship was sailing in toward the capital port, about five thousand feet up, when it started to wobble wildly. Ben Hollis reached out for the *Emergency Manual*, knocking over three bound volumes of *Mars Variety*, but by the time he'd come to *wobble* in the index the small ship was drifting in gentle zigzags down and down. And when he'd turned to page 481 the ship slammed into the ground, everything rattled and Ben blacked out. He never had been too good with mechanical things.

When he determined that he was alive and that the radio was working Ben sent in a report to the Biz Enterprises office. He was responsible for getting the Katy Priestly robot and the open-end spools to the capital in time for the big premiere. It was his first solo public relations job since he'd been transferred to Panam from Venus. This position was a lot more interesting and a lot more fun than selling LPs to the natives on Venus. Biz Enterprises had faith in him or they wouldn't have promoted him. He had to prove himself.

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Ottkins answered his call. "No time for much chat, Ben. Where are you location-wise?"

"I had a little bad luck, Ott. I seem to have crashed. I think I'm in a valley out here. But the robot's fine."

"Just sit tight. Did you take a reading with your tri-diviner?"

"I think it's broke."

"Well, we'll come and find you as soon as we get back."

"Back?"

"Everybody here's off for sort of a holiday."

"But, Ott, I got the stuff for the premiere."

"Premiere's postponed, guy. See, the natives have sort of gone amok here on Panam. You know how hard it is to deal with folks when they're excited. They already roasted the gang at the Coke Embassy. We're closing up shop till tempers cool."

"Yeah, but, Ott, I'm lost out here."

"No worry at all, Ben. This will blow over in a few weeks and we'll come out and find you. You've got your emergency kit. Just take a little vacation on us. And keep your eye on that robot. You're a good man, Ben. Hey, they're trying to slice up Thompson with those little knives of theirs. Got to get on that and stop it. See you. Good luck."

The radio wouldn't talk to him after that. But even if he was lost Ben Hollis had his assignment.

Ben looked in on the Katy Priestly robot twice a day during his first week in the valley. He lived on the rations in his emergency kit and studied his *Emergency Manual.* He explored the valley, which was hot and semi-tropical and seemed to have no obvious exits. At night he would read *Mars Variety,* drink a cup of emergency cocoa and turn in. Nobody came to rescue him.

The BE *Manual* was a really fine book. It taught Ben Hollis which growing things were edible and which were poisonous. It taught him how to set traps and what to do with the animals he caught.

Before he'd been in LP Sales Ben had worked on a monitor squad and one of the shows he'd watched regularly was a Venusian cooking class. About his third week in the valley he fixed all his meals Venusian style. An hour or two a day he'd sit by the radio, but nobody called. He'd never been able to contact the capital after the first day. But he was still on assignment. So he looked after the PR robot and waited.

From the BE *Manual Supplement* he learned how to build a hut. When he got that finished he moved most of his equipment in there. The crate with Katy Priestly, too, because he was still keeping an eye on that. When the premiere did come off, the robot would have to be shipshape.

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You can't take Venusian cooking all the time. Ben switched to Martian recipes the fourth week. The rainy cycle was starting on Panam and trapping was getting more complex. Ben featured more dishes with fruit and vegetables.

One wet, gray afternoon Ben built a fire in his hand-wrought stone fireplace, following advice he'd found in a letter to the editor of the BE *Manual Annual*. The rain was falling heavy on the roof, which he'd never been able to get completely weatherproof.

Ben was worried about the Katy Priestly robot. He wasn't an expert mechanic, but he had the idea the robot might rust or something. Following the instructions on the crate he unpacked the robot and set it in the chair he'd made out of yap bark. Katy Priestly was, when she made her films anyway, a slim girl with light blond hair and a medium tan. She had a dent on her forehead, but that didn't detract any. Larson had told Ben that at the height of Katy's career there had been twenty-five of these robots in circulation doing public relations and publicity work for her pictures.

After reading the directions carefully through twice Ben found the slot in the back of the robot's neck, under the hair where it didn't show, and inserted the first of the open end tapes. He decided to give the robot a test run to see if it was still in tiptop condition.

Going through the excelsior in the bottom of the crate Ben found the booklet with the interviewer's questions in it. Beside each question was the time the interviewer had to ask it and beside the answers the time of each response.

Ben had taken the BE night school course in Showmanship and he figured he could run through the questions well enough for a test. He looked them over and clicked on Katy Priestly.

"Well, how do you like it here on Panam, Miss Priestly?" Ben asked the warming-up robot, without even a hesitation at the spot where you had to fill in the planet name.

"Why, I think it's wonderful being here. I've always wanted to visit," answered the robot. Her voice was low, but with a young-girl quality in it.

"Your latest picture is called *Earth Is Earth, Mars Is Mars*. What sort of a picture is it?"

"It's all about love. The funny things it does to you. The way a sensitive young girl feels, you know," she said. There was no sign of rust.

"This is your fifth picture. Right, Miss Priestly?"

"That's right. And I've enjoyed them all."

Ben ran through the questions and the robot responded convinc-

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ingly each time. It was a believable tape, with a relaxed message that came across well. After getting Katy Priestly's advice to young actors Ben said, "Thank you for dropping by, Miss Priestly," and clicked off the robot.

BE would be glad to know the situation. Ben slipped on his rain-slicker and ran across the high yellow grass to the ship. There was still no reply at BE headquarters. He sat listening to the rain on the ship's hull for several minutes and then ran back to his hut and the fire.

If he hadn't been on assignment Ben Hollis would have worried more than he did. He knew BE would come for him as soon as they could. Meanwhile he had the Katy robot to take care of.

As the rainy season progressed Ben spent more time in the hut. By rereading the BE *Manual* he'd been able to fix the roof so that there was only one minor leak in the far corner.

For the sake of efficiency, to routine his assignment, Ben established the procedure of checking out Katy each morning. He would run through both open-end tapes, watching carefully for any signs of mechanical breakdown. It wasn't surprising, considering his grades in Showmanship, that he memorized the questions quickly and didn't have to consult the script.

Mornings were always enjoyable because of his work. Some of the long afternoons, with rain falling heavy all around, unsettled him. Not much, but a little.

Once each afternoon Ben would get into his rain gear and make a dash for the ship. He would warm up the radio and try to contact the capital. The most he ever got was a dry squawking sound.

He learned from the Orientation Section of the BE *Manual* that the rain would be letting up soon. In the last of the dark, rainy afternoons he set up the practice of giving Katy a second check. He ran through the tapes and noted his reactions to them, noted how the machine seemed to be operating. This meant more paper work, but Ben felt it was better to be safe than sorry.

Ben was stretched out in the dry yellow grass, his eyes half closed, when the idea occurred to him. With the rains passed it was pleasant in the valley. And he had his job to keep him occupied during the day. Still he missed, not all the time but now and then, people and conversation. He checked Katy three times a day now, but the questions had become automatic to him and it hardly seemed like real conversation anymore.

However, though Katy's responses were set, it occurred to him that there was no reason why

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he couldn't vary his questions. Not during office hours. Probably in the evening. Evenings were warm now and he kept the hut door open.

After dinner, back in Venusian style this week, Ben slipped a tape into Katy's neck and clicked her on. Timing was going to be the problem. . . .

"Well, we've been in this valley two months huh, Katy? Getting bored?" he asked, feeling a little silly.

"I think it's wonderful being here. I've always wanted to visit," she said, a hint of a smile in her voice.

"Still you've looked worried lately. What's bothering you?"

"It's all about love. The funny things it does to you. The way a sensitive young girl feels, you know."

"You love me? Kate, all these months you have?"

"That's right. And I've enjoyed them all."

Ben laughed here and got behind. He had to rush the next questions.

He decided to end on a serious note. "You do think things will work out here, don't you, Katy?"

"Yes. You've got to stick with it. Hard work is the key to success. And sticking to it. You've got to have patience. That's my advice," Katy said with conviction.

"Well, thank you, Katy."

"Thank you."

Twice during the night Ben woke up and found himself laughing.

During the pollen-drift season Ben discovered he had an allergy. He stayed in more, going out only for food and his visit to the ship radio.

He worked only half a day now and spent the afternoons reading up on sneezing and coughing in the *Manual.* Sometimes he would read sections of *Mars Variety* aloud to Katy. Sometimes he would just have a chat with her. Using both tapes and flicking the switch off and on Ben could talk up to an hour without any repetition from Katy. Tape 2 was mostly details about Katy's early life and ambitions. That got Ben to talking about his own childhood.

"I grew up on Mars," Ben said one afternoon. "With my uncle and aunt. How about you, Katy?"

"I was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A. On Earth, you know," Katy said.

"My dad was from Madison, Wisconsin. He was an art director for Earth & Associates, PR Division. He died when I was six. Maybe we could visit Earth sometime."

"Earth. Yes. You're always loyal to your home planet. Of course, I love your planet, too."

"And you like me. I'm glad."

"You should be."

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Toward evening Ben started pacing the stone floor he'd made for the hut. He began talking to Katy. Finally he asked her, "Katy, do you really think they'll come for us? Maybe we should try to get out of here and go look for them. Or do you think we should stay?"

"Yes. You've got to stick with it. Hard work is the key to success. And sticking to it. You've got to have patience. That's my advice," she said.

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

"Thank you."

Ben sat down on the floor and watched the empty fireplace. "Good old Katy," he said.

Ben came back from the ship and got out of his jacket across the room from Katy. "Another dust storm," he said. "Dust-storm season is starting." He shook the coat out carefully and came and stood in front of Katy. "I still can't make contact with BE. I don't know."

"Why, I think it's wonderful being here. I've always wanted to visit."

"Doesn't it get you? Why are you cheerful, Katy?"

"It's all about love," she said, her voice soft. "The funny things it does to you. The way a sensitive young girl feels, you know."

"Well, maybe it's love. Christ, though it seems like we've been here for years."

"That's right. And I've enjoyed them all."

Ben changed the subject. He might as well just talk small talk with Katy. But finally he had to say, "But my God, Katy, why have they just left us here for months? I like BE. Don't they like me? Look, let's leave here. Try to go to them. Maybe they've forgotten. They have lots of things on their minds." He looked into her face. "Katy? You don't still think we should wait. Huh?"

"Yes. You've got to stick with it. Hard work is the key to success. And sticking to it. You've got to have patience."

"You really believe that?"

"That's my advice."

"I suppose. I suppose BE will come. Sure, Katy, you're right."

"Thank you."

The rain hit soft on the roof, drops falling slow. Ben tossed a dry log into his fireplace and turned to Katy. "I had good ratings on all my tests. A little low in mechanical skills. But good in sales logic. And people relations. I mean, BE wouldn't just abandon me without looking."

"Love makes the universe go round," Katy said, smiling.

"You're being smart now. I suppose it's your privilege. You're a famous actress and all."

"Just a simple Earth girl," Katy said.

"Sure. But, really, Katy, I've

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done my job all this time. By now I should even be in line for a raise. I've looked after you and kept records. I'm sure BE will take that into consideration."

"Yes, it's a wonderful emotional experience."

"What is? Us being here?" He took her by the shoulder. "You still want us to stay? You think BE is going to come?"

"Yes. You've got to stick with it. Hard work is the key to success. And sticking to it. You've got to have patience."

Holding both Katy's shoulders Ben said, "Good God, Katy, we've known each other for months. We know all about each other. Can't you understand me? You see how I feel, don't you?"

"Thank you." Katy smiled.

Ben stepped back from her. "You don't really at all. All you give me is public relations crap for BE." His foot swung out and slammed into Katy's stomach. "Well, screw them."

Katy clanged over onto the floor, huddling her limbs together. Ben kicked her again and kept kicking her until her head rolled off and into the corner by the fireplace, trailing tubes and wires.

"I'm knocking off work," he said.

He went to the ship to tell BE about it. But they wouldn't answer. He kicked in the radio, too.

The rain came down fast. Ben stood in the grass and looked up into the sky. The rain fell harder and harder on his face. That was good. He was crying, but it would never show.

Anybody who followed the BE *Manual* knew you should wear your rain-slicker when out in the rain. "Screw them," Ben said. He'd come out without his coat.

Ben sat in the sun on the porch of his hut with his mouth tightly closed. One of these days he'd gather Katy up. Not that it would do any good. He'd never be able to fix her. He had a low mechanical-skills rating.

He was really sorry about Katy. To punish himself he refused to talk to anybody.

Now that the sun had come back that was hard. All the animals had come back, too. They had started talking to him and not knowing his reasons for keeping quiet they might be offended. It was bad public relations, but it couldn't be helped.

Same went for the trees and the rocks. He wasn't talking, he was punishing himself.

And that went for the flowers, too. Not a word. Although sometimes their funny squeaky voices made him laugh out loud.

FLASH! ***In August, don't miss Robert A. Heinlein's novel:***
HAVE SPACESUIT – WILL TRAVEL

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Isaac Asimov and I have a number of passions in common: We are both addicted to girls & science, to gags & spoofs, to ghosts & specters, to gyneolatry & speculation. . . . Those of you who share yet another similarly initialed enthusiasm with us will take particular delight in the following story; but even readers without such special tastes will relish a delightful departure in Asimov style and humor, and the ingenious solution of a riddle which has gone unanswered for over 80 years.

The Up-to-Date Sorcerer

by ISAAC ASIMOV

It always puzzled me that Nicholas Nitely, although a Justice of the Peace, was a bachelor. The atmosphere of his profession, so to speak, seemed so conducive to matrimony that surely he could scarcely avoid the gentle bond of wedlock.

When I said as much over a gin and tonic at the Club recently, he said, "Ah, but I had a narrow escape some time ago," and he sighed.

"Oh, really?"

"A fair young girl, sweet, intelligent, pure yet desperately ardent, and withal most alluring to the physical senses for even such an old fogy as myself."

I said, "How did you come to let her go?"

"I had no choice." He smiled gently at me and his smooth, ruddy complexion, his smooth gray hair, his smooth blue eyes, all combined to give him an expression of near-saintliness. He said, "You see, it was really the fault of her fiancé—"

"Ah, she was engaged to someone else."

"—and of Professor Wellington Johns, who was, although an endocrinologist, by way of being an up-to-date sorcerer. In fact, it was just that—" He sighed, sipped at his drink, and turned on me the bland and cheerful face of one who is about to change the subject.

I said firmly, "Now, then, Nitely, old man, you cannot leave it so. I want to know about your beautiful girl—the flesh that got away."

He winced at the pun (one, I

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must admit, of my more abominable efforts) and settled down by ordering his glass refilled. "You understand," he said, "I learned some of the details later on."

Professor Wellington Johns had a large and prominent nose, two sincere eyes and a distinct talent for making clothes appear too large for him. He said, "My dear children, love is a matter of chemistry."

His dear children, who were really students of his, and not his children at all, were named Alexander Dexter and Alice Sanger. They looked perfectly full of chemicals as they sat there, holding hands. Together, their age amounted to perhaps 45, evenly split between them, and Alexander said, fairly inevitably, "*Vive la chémie!*"

Professor Johns smiled reprovingly, "Or rather endocrinology. Hormones, after all, affect our emotions and it is not surprising that one should, specifically, stimulate that feeling we call love."

"But that's so unromantic," murmured Alice. "I'm sure I don't need any." She looked up at Alexander with a yearning glance.

"My dear," said the professor, "your blood stream was crawling with it at that moment you, as the saying is, fell in love. Its secretion had been stimulated by"—for a moment he considered his words carefully, being a highly moral man—"by some environmental factor involving your young man, and once the hormonal action had taken place, inertia carried you on. I could duplicate the effect easily."

"Why, Professor," said Alice, with gentle affection. "It would be delightful to have you try," and she squeezed Alexander's hand shyly.

"I do not mean," said the professor, coughing to hide his embarrassment, "that I would personally attempt to reproduce—or, rather, to duplicate the conditions that created the natural secretion of the hormone. I mean, instead, that I could inject the hormone itself by hypodermic or even by oral ingestion, since it is a steroid hormone. I have, you see," and here he removed his glasses and polished them proudly, "isolated and purified the hormone."

Alexander sat erect. "Professor! And you have said nothing?"

"I must know more about it first."

"Do you mean to say," said Alice, her lovely brown eyes shimmering with delight, "that you can make people feel the wonderful delight and heaven-surpassing tenderness of true love by means of a . . . a pill?"

The professor said, "I can indeed duplicate the emotion to which you refer in those rather cloying terms."

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"Then why don't you?"

Alexander raised a protesting hand. "Now, darling, your ardor leads you astray. Our own happiness and forthcoming nuptials make you forget certain facts of life. If a married person were, by mistake, to accept this hormone—"

Professor Johns said, with a trace of hauteur, "Let me explain right now that my hormone, or my amatogenic principle, as I call it—" (for he, in common with many practical scientists, enjoyed a proper scorn for the rarefied niceties of classical philology).

"Call it a love-philtre, Professor," said Alice, with a melting sigh.

"My amatogenic cortical principle," said Professor Johns, sternly, "has no affect on married individuals. The hormone cannot work if inhibited by other factors, and being married is certainly a factor that inhibits love."

"Why, so I have heard," said Alexander, gravely, "but I intend to disprove that callous belief in the case of my own Alice."

"Alexander," said Alice. "My love."

The professor said, "I mean that marriage inhibits extra-marital love."

Alexander said, "Why, it has come to my ears that sometimes it does not."

Alice said, shocked, "Alexander!"

"Only in rare instances, my dear, among those who have not gone to college."

The professor said, "Marriage may not inhibit a certain paltry sexual attraction, or tendencies toward minor trifling, but true love, as Miss Sanger expressed the emotion, is something which cannot blossom when the memory of a stern wife and various unattractive children hobbles the subconscious."

"Do you mean to say," said Alexander, "that if you were to feed your love-philtre—beg pardon, your amatogenic principle—to a number of people indiscriminately, only the *un*married individuals would be affected?"

"That is right. I have experimented on certain animals which, though not going through the conscious marriage rite, do form monogamous attachments. Those with the attachments already formed are not affected."

"Then, Professor, I have a perfectly splendid idea. Tomorrow night is the night of the Senior Dance here at college. There will be at least fifty couples present, mostly unmarried. Put your philtre in the punch."

"What? Are you mad?"

But Alice had caught fire. "Why, it's a heavenly idea, Professor. To think that all my friends will feel as I feel! Professor, you would be an angel from heaven. —But oh, Alexander, do you sup-

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pose the feelings might be a trifle uncontrolled? Some of our college chums are a little wild and if, in the heat of the discovery of love, they should, well, kiss—"

Professor Johns said, indignantly, "My dear Miss Sanger. You must not allow your imagination to become overheated. My hormone induces only those feelings which lead to marriage and not to the expression of anything that might be considered indecorous."

"I'm sorry," murmured Alice, in confusion. "I should remember, Professor, that you are the most highly moral man I know—excepting always dear Alexander—and that no scientific discovery of yours could possibly lead to immorality."

She looked so woebegone that the professor forgave her at once.

"Then you'll do it, Professor?" urged Alexander. "After all, assuming there will be a sudden urge for mass marriage afterward, I can take care of that by having Nicholas Nitely, an old and valued friend of the family, present on some pretext. He is a Justice of the Peace and can easily arrange for such things as licenses and so on."

"I could scarcely agree," said the professor, obviously weakening, "to perform an experiment without the consent of those experimented upon. It would be unethical."

"But you would be bringing only joy to them. You would be contributing to the moral atmosphere of the college. For surely, in the absence of overwhelming pressure toward marriage, it sometimes happens even in college that the pressure of continuous propinquity breeds a certain danger of—of—"

"Yes, there is that," said the professor. "Well, I shall try a dilute solution. After all, the results may advance scientific knowledge tremendously and, as you say, it will also advance morality."

Alexander said, "And, of course, Alice and I will drink the punch, too."

Alice said, "Oh, Alexander, surely such love as ours needs no artificial aid."

"But it would not be artificial, my soul's own. According to the professor, your love began as a result of just such a hormonal effect, induced, I admit, by more customary methods."

Alice blushed rosily. "But then, my only love, why the need for the repetition?"

"To place us beyond all vicissitudes of Fate, my cherished one."

"Surely, my adored, you don't doubt my love."

"No, my heart's charmer, but—"

"*But?* Is it that you do not trust me, Alexander?"

"Of course I trust you, Alice, but—"

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"*But?* Again but!" Alice rose, furious. "If you cannot trust me, sir, perhaps I had better leave—" And she did leave indeed, while the two men stared after her, stunned.

Professor Johns said, "I am afraid my hormone has, quite indirectly, been the occasion of spoiling a marriage rather than of causing one."

Alexander swallowed miserably, but his pride upheld him. "She will come back," he said, hollowly. "A love such as ours is not so easily broken."

The Senior Dance was, of course, the event of the year. The young men shone and the young ladies glittered. The music lilted and the dancing feet touched the ground only at intervals. Joy was unrestrained.

Or, rather, it was unrestrained in most cases. Alexander Dexter stood in one corner, eyes hard, expression icily bleak. Straight and handsome he might be, but no young woman approached him. He was known to belong to Alice Sanger, and under such circumstances, no college girl would dream of poaching. — Yet where was Alice?

She had not come with Alexander and Alexander's pride prevented him from searching for her. From under grim eyelids, he could only watch the circulating couples cautiously.

Professor Johns, in formal clothes that did not fit although made to measure, approached him. He said, "I will add my hormone to the punch shortly before the midnight toast. Is Mr. Nitely still here?"

"I saw him a moment ago. In his capacity as chaperone he was busily engaged in making certain that the proper distance between dancing couples was maintained. Four fingers, I believe, at the point of closest approach. Mr. Nitely was most diligently making the necessary measurements."

"Very good. Oh, I had neglected to ask: Is the punch alcoholic? Alcohol would affect the workings of the amatogenic principle adversely."

Alexander, despite his sore heart, found spirit to deny the unintended slur upon his class. "Alcoholic, Professor? This punch is made along those principles firmly adhered to by all young college students. It contains only the purest of fruit juices, refined sugar, and a certain quantity of lemon peel—enough to stimulate but not inebriate."

"Good," said the professor. "Now I have added to the hormone a sedative designed to put our experimental subjects to sleep for a short time while the hormone works. Once they awaken, the first individual each sees—that is, of course, of the opposite sex—will inspire that individual

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with a pure and noble ardor that can end only in marriage."

Then, since it was nearly midnight, he made his way through the happy couples, all dancing at four-fingers distance, to the punch bowl.

Alexander, depressed nearly to tears, stepped out to the balcony. In doing so, he just missed Alice, who entered the ballroom from the balcony by another door.

"Midnight," called out a happy voice. "Toast! Toast! Toast to the life ahead of us."

They crowded about the punch bowl; the little glasses were passed round.

"To the life ahead of us," they cried out and, with all the enthusiasm of young college students, downed the fiery mixture of pure fruit juices, sugar and lemon peel, with—of course—the professor's sedated amatogenic principle.

As the fumes rose to their brains, they slowly crumpled to the floor.

Alice stood there alone, still holding her drink, eyes wet with unshed tears. "Oh, Alexander, Alexander, though you doubt, yet are you my only love. You wish me to drink and I shall drink." Then she, too, sank gracefully downward.

Nicholas Nitely had gone in search of Alexander, for whom his warm heart was concerned. He had seen him arrive without Alice and he could only assume that a lovers' quarrel had taken place. Nor did he feel any dismay at leaving the party to its own devices. These were not wild youngsters, but college boys and girls of good family and gentle upbringing. They could be trusted to the full to observe the four-finger limit, as he well knew.

He found Alexander on the balcony, staring moodily out at a star-riddled sky.

"Alexander, my boy." He put his hand on the young man's shoulder. "This is not like you. To give way so to depression. Chut, my young friend, chut."

Alexander's head bowed at the sound of the good old man's voice. "It is unmanly, I know, but I yearn for Alice. I have been cruel to her and I am justly treated now. And yet, Mr. Nitely, if you could but know—" He placed his clenched fist on his chest, next his heart. He could say no more.

Nitely said, sorrowfully, "Do you think because I am unmarried that I am unacquainted with the softer emotions? Be undeceived. Time was when I, too, knew love and heartbreak. But do not do as I did once and allow pride to prevent your reunion. Seek her out, my boy, seek her out and apologize. Do not allow yourself to become a solitary old bachelor such as I, myself. — But, tush, I am puling."

Alexander's back had straight-

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ened. "I will be guided by you, Mr. Nitely. I will seek her out."

"Then go on in. For shortly before I came out, I believe I saw her there."

Alexander's heart leaped. "Perhaps she searches for me even now. I will go— But, no. Go you first, Mr. Nitely, while I stay behind to recover myself. I would not have her see me a prey to womanish tears."

"Of course, my boy."

Nitely stopped at the door into the ballroom in astonishment. Had a universal catastrophe struck all low? Fifty couples were lying on the floor, some heaped together most indecorously.

But before he could make up his mind to see if the nearest were dead, to sound the fire alarm, to call the police, to anything, they were rousing and struggling to their feet.

Only one still remained. A lonely girl in white, one arm outstretched gracefully beneath her fair head. It was Alice Sanger and Nitely hastened to her, oblivious to the rising clamor about him.

He sank to his knees. "Miss Sanger. My dear Miss Sanger. Are you hurt?"

She opened her beautiful eyes slowly, and said, "Mr. Nitely! I never realized you were such a vision of loveliness."

"I?" Nitely started back with horror, but she had now risen to her feet and there was a light in her eyes such as Nitely had not seen in a maiden's eyes for thirty years—and then only weakly.

She said, "Mr. Nitely, surely you will not leave me?"

"No, no," said Nitely, confused. "If you need me, I shall stay."

"I need you. I need you with all my heart and soul. I need you as a thirsty flower needs the morning dew. I need you as Thisbe of old needed Pyramus."

Nitely, still backing away, looked about hastily, to see if anyone could be hearing this unusual declaration, but no one seemed to be paying any attention. As nearly as he could make out, the air was filled with other declarations of similar sort, some being even more forceful and direct.

His back was up against a wall, and Alice approached him so closely as to break the four-finger rule to smithereens. She broke, in fact, the no-finger rule, and at the resulting mutual pressure, a certain indefinable something seemed to thud away within Nitely.

"Miss Sanger. Please."

"Miss Sanger? Am I Miss Sanger to you?" exclaimed Alice, passionately. "Mr. Nitely! Nicholas! Make me your Alice, your own. Marry me. Marry me!"

All around there was the cry of "Marry me. Marry me!" and young men and women crowded

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around Nitely, for they knew well that he was a Justice of the Peace. They cried out, "Marry us, Mr. Nitely. Marry us!"

He could only cry in return, "I must get you all licenses."

They parted to let him leave on that errand of mercy. Only Alice followed him.

Nitely met Alexander at the door of the balcony and turned him back toward the open and fresh air. Professor Johns came at that moment to join them all.

Nitely said, "Alexander. Professor Johns. The most extraordinary thing has occurred—"

"Yes," said the professor, his mild face beaming with joy. "The experiment has been a success. The principle is far more effective on the human being, in fact, than on any of my experimental animals." Noting Nitely's confusion, he explained what had occurred in brief sentences.

Nitely listened and muttered, "Strange, strange. There is a certain elusive familiarity about this." He pressed his forehead with the knuckles of both hands, but it did not help.

Alexander approached Alice gently, yearning to clasp her to his strong bosom, yet knowing that no gently nurtured girl could consent to such an expression of emotion from one who had not yet been forgiven.

He said, "Alice, my lost love, if in your heart you could find—"

But she shrank from him, avoiding his arms though they were outstretched only in supplication. She said, "Alexander, I drank the punch. It was your wish."

"You needn't have. I was wrong, wrong."

"But I did, and oh, Alexander, I can never be yours."

"Never be mine? But what does this mean?"

And Alice, seizing Nitely's arm, clutched it avidly. "My soul is intertwined indissolubly with that of Mr. Nitely, of Nicholas, I mean. My passion for him—that is, my passion for marriage with him—cannot be withstood. It racks my being."

"You are false?" cried Alexander, unbelieving.

"You are cruel to say 'false,'" said Alice, sobbing. "I cannot help it."

"No, indeed," said Professor Johns, who had been listening to this in the greatest consternation, after having made his explanation to Nitely. "She could scarcely help it. It is simply an endocrinological manifestation."

"Indeed that is so," said Nitely, who was struggling with endocrinological manifestations of his own. "There, there, my—my dear." He patted Alice's head in a most fatherly way and when she held her enticing face up toward his, swooningly, he considered

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whether with her alluring lips pursed most swooningly, he considered whether it might not be a fatherly thing—nay, even a neighborly thing—to press those lips with his own, in pure fashion.

But Alexander, out of his heart's despair, cried, "You are false, false—false as Cressid," and rushed from the room.

And Nitely would have gone after him, but that Alice had seized him about the neck and bestowed upon his slowly melting lips a kiss that was not daughterly in the least.

It was not even neighborly.

They arrived at Nitely's small bachelor cottage with its chaste sign of JUSTICE OF THE PEACE in Old English letters, its air of melancholy peace, its neat serenity, its small stove on which the small kettle was quickly placed by Nitely's left hand (his right arm being firmly in the clutch of Alice who, with a shrewdness beyond her years, chose that as one sure method of rendering impossible a sudden bolt through the door on his part).

Nitely's study could be seen through the open door of the dining room, its walls lined with gentle books of scholarship and joy.

Again Nitely's hand (his left hand) went to his brow. "My dear," he said to Alice, "it is amazing the way—if you would release your hold the merest trifle, my child, so that circulation might be restored—the way in which I persist in imagining that all this has taken place before."

"Surely never before, my dear Nicholas," said Alice, bending her fair head upon his shoulder, and smiling at him with a shy tenderness that made her beauty as bewitching as moonlight upon still waters, "could there have been so wonderful a modern-day magician as our wise Professor Johns, so up-to-date a sorcerer."

"So up-to-date a—" Nitely had started so violently as to lift the fair Alice a full inch from the floor. "Why, surely that must be it. Dickens take me, if that's not it." (For on rare occasions, and under the stress of overpowering emotions, Nitely used strong language.)

"Nicholas. What is it? You frighten me, my cherubic one."

But Nitely walked rapidly into his study, and she was forced to run with him. His face was white, his lips firm, as he reached for a volume from the shelves and reverently blew the dust from it.

"Ah," he said with contrition, "how I have neglected the innocent joys of my younger days. My child, in view of this continuing incapacity of my right arm, would you be so kind as to turn the pages until I tell you to stop?"

Together they managed, in

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such a tableau of preconnubial bliss as is rarely seen, he holding the book with his left hand, she turning the pages slowly with her right.

"I am right!" Nitely said with sudden force. "Professor Johns, my dear fellow, do come here. This is the most amazing coincidence—a frightening example of the mysterious unfelt power that must sport with us on occasion for some hidden purpose."

Professor Johns, who had prepared his own tea and was sipping it patiently, as befitted a discreet gentleman of intellectual habit in the presence of two ardent lovers who had suddenly retired to the next room, called out, "Surely you do not wish my presence?"

"But I do, sir. I would fain consult one of your scientific attainments."

"But you are in a position—"

Alice screamed faintly, "Professor!"

"A thousand pardons, my dear," said Professor Johns, entering. "My cobwebby old mind is filled with ridiculous fancies. It is long since I—" and he pulled mightily at his tea (which he had made strong) and was himself again at once.

"Professor," said Nitely. "This dear child referred to you as an up-to-date sorcerer and that turned my mind instantly to Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer*."

"What," asked Professor Johns, mildly, "are Gilbert and Sullivan?"

Nitely cast a devout glance upward, as though with the intention of gaging the direction of the inevitable thunderbolt and dodging. He said in a hoarse whisper, "Sir William Schwenk Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote, respectively, the words and music of the greatest musical comedies the world has ever seen. One of these is entitled *The Sorcerer*. In it, too, a philtre was used: a highly moral one which did not affect married people, but which did manage to deflect the young heroine away from her handsome young lover and into the arms of an elderly man."

"And," asked Professor Johns, "were matters allowed to remain so?"

"Well, no. — Really, my dear, the movements of your fingers in the region of the nape of my neck, while giving rise to undeniably pleasurably sensations, *do* rather distract me. — There is a reunion of the young lovers, Professor."

"Ah," said Professor Johns. "Then in view of the close resemblance of the fictional plot to real life, perhaps the solution in the play will help point the way to the reunion of Alice and Alexander. At least, I presume you do not wish to go through life with one arm permanently useless."

Alice said, "I have no wish to

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be reunited. I want only my own Nicholas."

"There is something," said Nitely, "to be said for that refreshing point of view, but tush—youth must be served. There *is* a solution in the play, Professor Johns, and it is for that reason that I most particularly wanted to talk to you." He smiled with a gentle benevolence. "In the play, the effects of the potion were completely neutralized by the actions of the gentleman who administered the potion in the first place: the gentleman in other words, analogous to yourself."

"And those actions were?"

"Suicide! Simply that! In some manner unexplained by the authors, the effect of this suicide was to break the sp—"

But by now Professor Johns had recovered his equilibrium and said in the most sepulchrally forceful tone that could be imagined, "My dear sir, may I state instantly, that, despite my affection for the young persons involved in this sad dilemma, I cannot under any circumstances consent to self-immolation. Such a procedure might be extremely efficacious in connection with love-potions of ordinary vintage, but my amatogenic principle, I assure you, would be completely unaffected by my death."

Nitely sighed. "I feared that. As a matter of fact, between ourselves, it was a very poor ending for the play, perhaps the poorest in the canon," and he looked up briefly in mute apology to the spirit of William S. Gilbert. "It was pulled out of a hat. It had not been properly foreshadowed earlier in the play. It punished an individual who did not deserve the punishment. In short, it was, alas, completely unworthy of Gilbert's powerful genius."

Professor Johns said, "Perhaps it was not Gilbert. Perhaps some bungler had interfered and botched the job."

"There is no record of that."

But Professor Johns, his scientific mind keenly aroused by an unsolved puzzle, said at once, "We can test this. Let us study the mind of this—this Gilbert. He wrote other plays, did he?"

"Fourteen, in collaboration with Sullivan."

"Were there endings that resolved analogous situations in ways which were more appropriate?"

Nitely nodded. "One, certainly. There was *Ruddigore*."

"Who was he?"

"Ruddigore is a place. The main character is revealed as the true bad baronet of Ruddigore and is, of course, under a curse."

"To be sure," muttered Professor Johns, who realized that such an eventuality frequently befell bad baronets and was even inclined to think it served them right.

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Nitely said, "The curse compelled him to commit one crime or more each day. Were one day to pass without a crime, he would inevitably die in agonizing torture."

"How horrible," murmured the soft-hearted Alice.

"Naturally," said Nitely, "no one can think up a crime each day, so our hero was forced to use his ingenuity to circumvent the curse."

"How?"

"He reasoned thus: If he deliberately refused to commit a crime, he was courting death by his own act. In other words, he was attempting suicide, and attempting suicide is, of course, a crime—and so he fulfills the conditions of the curse."

"I see. I see," said Professor Johns. "Gilbert obviously believes in solving matters by carrying them forward to their logical conclusions." He closed his eyes, and his noble brow clearly bulged with the numerous intense thought waves it contained.

He opened them. "Nitely, old chap, when was *The Sorcerer* first produced?"

"In eighteen hundred and seventy-seven."

"Then that is it, my dear fellow. In eighteen seventy-seven, we were faced with the Victorian age. The institution of marriage was not to be made sport of on the stage. It could not be made a comic matter for the sake of the plot. Marriage was holy, spiritual, a sacrament—"

"Enough," said Nitely, "of this apostrophe. What is in your mind?"

"Marriage. Marry the girl, Nitely. Have all your couples marry, and that at once. I'm sure that was Gilbert's original intention."

"But that," said Nitely, who was strangely attracted by the notion, "is precisely what we are trying to avoid."

"I am not," said Alice, stoutly (though she was not stout, but, on the contrary, enchantingly lithe and slender).

Professor Johns said, "Don't you see? Once each couple is married, the amatogenic principle—which does not affect married people—loses its power over them. Those who would have been in love without the aid of the principle remain in love; those who would not, are no longer in love—and consequently apply for an annulment."

"Good heavens," said Nitely. "How admirably simple. Of course! Gilbert must have intended that until a shocked producer or theater manager—a bungler, as you say—forced the change."

"And did it work?" I asked. "After all, you said quite distinctly that the professor had said

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its effect on married couples was only to inhibit extra-marital re—"

"It worked," said Nitely, ignoring my comment. A tear trembled on his eyelid, but whether it was induced by memories or by the fact that he was on his fourth gin and tonic, I could not tell.

"It worked," he said. "Alice and I were married, and our marriage was almost instantly annulled by mutual consent on the grounds of the use of undue pressure. And yet, because of the incessant chaperoning to which we were subjected, the incidence of undue pressure between ourselves was, unfortunately, virtually nil." He sighed again. "At any rate, Alice and Alexander were married soon after and she is now, I understand, as a result of various concomitant events, expecting a child."

He withdrew his eyes from the deep recesses of what was left of his drink and gasped with sudden alarm. "Dear me! She again."

I looked up, startled. A vision in pastel blue was in the doorway. Imagine, if you will, a charming face made for kissing; a lovely body, made for loving.

She called, "Nicholas! Wait!"

"Is that Alice?" I asked.

"No, no. This is someone else entirely: a completely different story. — But I must not remain here."

He rose and, with an agility remarkable in one so advanced in years and weight, made his way through a window. The feminine vision of desirability, with an agility only slightly less remarkable, followed.

I shook my head in pity and sympathy. Obviously, the poor man was continually plagued by these wondrous things of beauty who, for one reason or another, were enamored of him. At the thought of this horrible fate, I downed my own drink at a gulp and considered the odd fact that no such difficulties had ever troubled me.

And at that thought, strange to tell, I ordered another drink savagely, and a scatological exclamation rose, unbidden, to my lips.

Coming Next Month

The big news for next month is, of course, the beginning of Robert A. Heinlein's stimulating, inventive, exciting new serial HAVE SPACE SUIT—WILL TRAVEL. But there'll be other special pleasures too: one of the extremely rare fantasies by C. S. Forester, creator of Horatio Hornblower; stories by Avram Davidson and Richard Matheson at their best and most individual; a new F&SF "first" by Leslie Jones—and the first short story anywhere by Charles G. (THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO) Finney. This all-new issue (no reprints) looks from this side of the editorial desk like one of our best—don't miss it.

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The Science Stage

CLERAMBARD, a new comedy by Marcel Aymé (adapted by Norman Denny and Alvin Sapinsley), starring Claude Dauphin, directed by Ira Cirker, production designed and lighted by Leo Kerz, costumes by Ruth Morley, presented at the Rooftop Theatre by Leo Kerz, Leonard Lesley, and Joy Thomson.

CLERAMBARD is an interesting and at the same time disappointing tale of two miracles, one destined to be debunked, the other genuine. It had the benefit of fine acting by Claude Dauphin in the difficult central role, by Edith Atwater, Ruth McDevitt, and Will Kulava in the chief supporting roles, and by other players in smaller parts. Its central character, an impoverished and ferocious count, is fantastic and incredible both when he is interested in animals only because they are edible and after his conversion by a supposed vision of St. Francis, when he loves them because they are his brothers and sisters. Mr. Dauphin, however, makes him amusing and, on the few occasions the script permits, touching.

Unfortunately, it does not permit often enough. The characters, as targets for the playwright's humor, cannot greatly engage our emotions. The play must therefore be a satire—but on what? On the impoverished nobility of France, on the clergy, on people who believe in miracles, or on those who pretend to believe in them and can't see them happening before their eyes? The viewpoint shifts so often that only in the final moments does the scene come into reasonably clear focus.

By then it's too late. There have been laughs, but we are not quite sure what we have been laughing at. And between laughs there is a little too much time to stop and wonder.

BACK TO METHUSELAH, a Theatre Guild production of Bernard Shaw's play in a new version by Arnold Moss, starring Tyrone Power, Faye Emerson, and Arthur Treacher, directed by Margaret Webster, scenery and lighting by Marvin Reiss, costumes by Patricia Zipprodt, electronic effects created by Vladimir Ussachevsky and Otto Luening.

It would be unfair to think of this abridged version of Shaw's opus on longevity as The Incredible Shrinking Play. Leaving for a

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time the problems of our own day, Shaw wrote a drama for the ages. With infinite life at his disposal, the master let himself go and produced a script that back in 1922 required no less than nine hours of playing time. Aware that modern audiences, when not immobilized before a TV set, are short on *Sitzfleisch*, Arnold Moss has cut this down to a mere two hours and a few odd minutes. But if by the end of an evening you aren't convinced that you've sat through a masterpiece, don't blame Mr. Moss for a bad editing job. The fault lies neither in him nor in the stars the Theatre Guild has assembled for the night's work. It is Mr. Shaw's.

In BACK TO METHUSELAH the dramatist anticipated some prominent science fiction twists of recent years. Among the more sardonic ones is this, that the desired immortality of the human race will turn out in the long run to be a purely intellectual affair, the Ancients of Shaw's imagination losing their taste for material pleasures and turning to the prospect of endless Thought as the supreme delight. This might appeal to certain philosophers and it might have seemed like a terrific idea to Shaw himself, who as a vegetarian and a lover-by-correspondence didn't have much taste for material pleasures to start with. It did not appeal to the numerous Ancients who sat around me in the audience, regretting the material pleasures that were gone, and it left unmoved the young people anticipating pleasures yet to come.

The bleakness of this happy future is matched by a general coldness in the dramatic atmosphere. Shaw may have felt sufficiently excited intellectually about the prospects of living forever to write dialogue for three evenings of acting, but he did not communicate his excitement to his audiences, as elsewhere he communicated his passionate anger at social injustice.

Under the circumstances Mr. Moss has probably done as good a job as is possible. With all its weaknesses, BACK TO METHUSELAH has many enjoyable passages. In the guise of Shaw himself, Mr. Moss does an amusing job of lending coherence to the abridged play. Tyrone Power plays his various parts with a relish and skill he rarely had a chance to display in his heroic movie roles. Faye Emerson is attractive, amusing, and touching in her own roles, and Arthur Treacher makes you wonder what idiots limited him to being a butler for so long.

All in all, however, the evening belongs to Shaw, and the play's chief weaknesses are his. It is a measure of his strength, nonetheless, that more than 35 years after it was written, the script retains as much interest as it does. Even second-rate Shaw appears to have a high expectation of longevity.

WILLIAM MORRISON

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Ellery Queen has called Roy Vickers "the most brilliant contemporary manipulator of the 'inverted' method" in the detective story; and few readers of short crime fiction will forget the impact of Vickers' THE DEPARTMENT OF DEAD ENDS *(Mercury, 1947; Penguin, 1956). [Note of bibliographical confusion: These two identically titled paperback editions are quite different in contents, if equally splendid in quality.] More than 40 years ago, long before he was to create the D.D.E., Mr. Vickers experimented with fantasy, and brought to conventional ghost stories the same quality of "a kind of realism unmatched in their field" which Queen finds in his tales of detection. This 1915 Vickers story, never before published in this country, is no post-Gothic echo of baronets and battlements, but a striking pioneer in the creation of a modern ghost for mechanized urban life (and death).*

The Eighth Lamp

by ROY VICKERS

WITH A MUFFLED, METALLIC ROAR the twelve forty-five, the last train on the Underground, lurched into Cheyne Road Station. A small party of belated theatre-goers alighted; the sleepy guard blew his whistle, and the train rumbled on its way to the outlying suburbs.

A couple of minutes later, Signalman George Raoul emerged from the tunnel, swung himself on to the up-platform and switched off the nearest lamp. Simultaneously a door in the wall on the down-side opened and the stationmaster appeared.

"Nothing to report, Mr. Jenkins," said Raoul. He spoke in an ordinary speaking voice, but in the dead silence of the station his words carried easily across the rails—words that were totally untrue. He had something of considerable importance to report, but he knew that if he were to make that report he would probably be marked down as unfit for night duty, and he could not afford to risk that at present.

"All right, George. Good night."

"G'night, Mr. Jenkins."

Raoul passed down the length of the up-platform, dousing each light as he came to the switch.

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Then he dropped on to the track, crossed and made for the farthest switch on the down-platform.

Cheyne Road Station was wholly underground—it was but an enlarged strip of tunnel—and the lighting regulations did not apply to it. There were eight lamps on each platform.

The snap of the switch echoed in the deserted station like the crack of a pistol. Raoul started. The silence that followed gripped him. Pulling himself together he hurried on to the second switch.

"Ugh!"

By the third lamp he stopped and shuddered as his eye fell upon a recruiting poster. In the gloom the colouring of the poster was lost—some crudity in the printing asserted itself—and the beckoning smile of a young soldier seemed like the mirthless grin of a death mask. And the death mask was just like——

"You're all right," he assured himself aloud. "It's the new station that's doing it."

Yes, it was the new station that was doing it. But he would not grumble on that account. It was a bit of rare luck, being transferred from Baker Street—just when he was transferred. For all its familiarity, he could never have stood night-work at Baker Street—now.

Even after three weeks in the new signal-box he could never "pass" a Circle train without a faint shudder. The Circle trains had a morbid fascination for him. They passed you on the down-line. Half a dozen stations and they would be pulling up at Baker Street. Then on through the tunnel and, in about an hour, back they came past your box and still on the down-line. In the Circle trains his half-nurtured imagination saw something ruthless and inevitable — something vaguely connected with fate and eternity.

His mind had momentarily wandered so that he took the fourth switch unconsciously. As he made for the fifth, his nerve again faltered.

"Didn't ought to have taken on this extra work," he seemed to shout into the dark mouth of the tunnel. "'Tain't worth it for three bob. It's the cleaner's job by rights."

Yes, it was the cleaner's job by rights. But the cleaner was an old man, unreliable for night-work; and when the stationmaster had offered Raoul the job of "clearing up last thing" for three shillings a week, he had jumped at it. The three shillings would make life perceptibly brighter for Jinny—her new life with him.

Between the fifth lamp and the sixth was the stationmaster's den. On a nail outside the door hung the keys with which Raoul would presently lock the ticket-barrier and the outer door of the booking-office.

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He snatched the keys as he passed and then, as if to humanise the desolation, he broke into a piercing, tuneless whistle that carried him to the seventh lamp.

A trifling mechanical difficulty with the seventh switch was enough to check the whistling. For a moment he stood motionless in the silence—the silence that seemed to come out of the tunnel like a dank mist and envelop him. He measured the distance to the switch of the eighth lamp. The switch of the eighth lamp was by the foot of the staircase. He need scarcely stop as he turned it—and then he would let himself take the staircase two, three, four steps at a time.

Click!

The eighth lamp was extinguished. From the ticket-office on the street level a single ray of light made blacker the darkness of the station. But Raoul, within a couple of feet of the staircase, waited, crouching.

His hand clutched the stair-rail and he twisted his body round so that he could look up the line. He could not see more than a few feet in front of him, but he could hear, distinct and unmistakable, the rumbling murmur of an approaching train.

All his instincts as a railway man told him that his senses were deceiving him. The twelve forty-five was the last train down—and he and the stationmaster had together seen it through. There were a dozen reasons why it would be impossible for another train to run without previous notification to the signalling staff. And yet—the rumbling was growing momentarily louder. The air, driven through the tunnel before the advancing train, was blowing like a breeze upon his face.

Louder and louder grew the rumbling until it rose to the familiar roar. In another second he would see the lights.

But there were no lights. The train lurched and clattered through the station and was swallowed up in the down-side tunnel. There were no lights, but Raoul had seen that it was a Circle train.

For a nightmare eternity he seemed to be rushing with gigantic strides up an endless staircase—across a vast hall that had once been a ticket-office, and then:

"Hi! Where yer comin' to?"

The raucous indignation of the night constable, into whom he had cannoned, recalled him to sanity.

"Sorry, mate!" he panted. "I didn't see you—as I come by."

"Call that comin' by?" demanded the constable. "Why, you was running like a house afire! What's going on down there, then?"

"Nothing," retorted Raoul.

The constable, unsatisfied,

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walked through the ticket-office and peered over the barrier. The silence and the darkness gave him a hint.

"Bit lonesome down there, last thing, ain't it?" he suggested.

"Yes," grunted Raoul, as he locked the barrier, "somethin' chronic."

"I know," said the constable. He had not been on night duty for ten years without learning the meaning of nerves.

A short chat with the constable served to restore Raoul's balance, after which he locked up as usual and made his way to the tenement he shared with Jinny, resolving that this time he would report the occurrence to the stationmaster on the following day.

During their three weeks occupation of the tenement Jinny had made a practice of waiting up to give him his supper. As he came in she was lying asleep, half-dressed, in the "second-hand upholstered armchair" that had been theirs for three weeks.

"Hullo, Jinny!" he called, with intentional loudness. He wanted to wake her up thoroughly so that she would chatter to him.

"Blessed if I hadn't dropped off!" she exclaimed by way of apology, as she hastily got up and busied herself with his cocoa.

"There's no need for you to wait up, you know, Jinny," he said, as he seated himself at the table. "Only I'm not denying as I'm glad to see you a bit before we turn in.

"Funny thing 'appened tonight," he went on. "After I'd seen the twelve forty-five through and Mr. Jenkins 'ad gone and I'd nearly finished turnin' off the lights——"

He told the whole story jovially, jauntily, as if it were a rather good joke. He attained a certain vividness of expression which only became blurred at that part which dealt with his own sensations after the passing of the train.

The woman was wide awake before he had finished. All her life she had indirectly depended on the Underground Railway, and knew its workings almost as well as the signalman himself.

"'Arf a mo', George!" she said, as he finished. "How did it get past the signal if you was out of your box?"

"That's what beats me!" exclaimed George Raoul, thumping the table as if herein lay the very cream of the joke.

She looked at him with the dawning suspicion that he had been drinking; but as she looked she knew that he had not.

"What sort o' train was it?" she asked, keeping her eyes fixed on his.

For a moment he did not reply. His gaze dwelt on his cocoa as he answered:

"Circle train."

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Jinny made no reply, and the subject was dropped.

An hour later neither of them was asleep.

"Jinny," said Raoul, "what yer thinkin' about?"

"Nothing," she retorted, and her voice came sulkily through the darkness.

"Go on. Out with it!"

"All right! 'Ave it your own way, an' don't blame me. I was wonderin' what Pete was doin' now—this minute."

"Pete!" echoed Raoul, through teeth that chattered, though he tried to clench them. "You've no call to wonder about 'im—not after the way he served you, his lawful, wedded wife."

"I didn't mean to," she defended herself; "only you tellin' me about that train—and 'im being a Circle driver—set me off."

"You've no call to think about 'im," repeated Raoul doggedly. "You can lay he ain't thinkin' about you—'e's thinkin' about the woman he left you for."

There was a moment's silence, and then:

"P'r'aps—and p'r'aps not," replied Jinny.

On the following morning Raoul decided that he would still say nothing to the stationmaster about the train that had followed the twelve forty-five.

The position was by no means an easy one. He knew that his nerves would not stand the strain of turning out the lights on the platform—not yet awhile, anyhow. On the other hand, he dared not throw up his job. During the last three weeks he had seen something of Jinny's nature; and although his animal love for her had in no way abated, he had a pretty shrewd suspicion that she would not face even temporary destitution with him.

After much deliberation, he hit on a comparatively neat compromise. As he left home to go on duty he approached an elderly loafer leaning against the wall of a public house near the station.

"Suppose you don't want a tanner a night for five minutes' work as a child could do?" he suggested.

"All accordin' to what the work is," answered the loafer.

"Turnin' off the lights mostly," said Raoul. "Anyway, if you want the job 'ang about 'ere"—indicating the station—"at twelve forty-five sharp until you see the stationmaster come off. Then 'op into the station. You'll find me on the platform.

"I'm doing this on me own," he added. "My missis likes me to be 'ome early, and it's worth a tanner a night for a bit of 'elp. See?"

The loss of the extra three shillings a week, Raoul decided, could safely be ascribed to an act of war economy on the part of

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the railway company. Better lose three bob a week than have to chuck up your job, he reasoned.

The services of the loafer proved a wise investment. Raoul showed him where to find the switches. On the first night he explained it all over and over again, glancing from time to time towards the tunnel, thereby extracting full value for his sixpence.

The explanation finished, and while three lamps remained burning, he left the loafer for a suddenly remembered duty on the ticket-office level. Thence, in a comfortable circle of light, he presently called:

"Turn off them last three lights, mate, and come up."

The loafer sluggishly obeyed, and then shambled up the staircase to receive the most easily earned sixpence of his life.

"Same time to-morrer night if you're on," said Raoul.

"I'm on right enough," replied the loafer.

That formula was repeated every night for some half-a-dozen nights. Then came a night on which the loafer failed to appear.

For five minutes Raoul waited. He went up to the street level and looked round. The station was deserted—there was not even a constable on point duty.

When the loafer's defection became obvious, Raoul's first thought was to leave the lights burning and go straight home. Reflection showed that this would mean the sack—which in turn would mean the probable loss of Jinny—the loss of that for which the very agonies he was now enduring had been incurred.

Besides, there was another thought that drove him back into the station. Somehow or other he would be compelled to explain why he had left the lights burning—why he had been afraid to return to the station. They would ask questions. And God knew where those questions might lead!

The up-platform presented no terrors. On the down-platform—in the moment of utter darkness when the eighth lamp was extinguished—he knew that his fear would reach its zenith. And precisely at that moment the distant rumbling in the tunnel began—the driven air, like a breeze, played about his temples.

He could not prevent his eyes from staring in the direction of the tunnel. He tried to move backwards up the staircase, but all power of voluntary action had left him.

The train seemed to slacken speed as it rolled into the station. As it came towards him, slowly and more slowly, his eyes were glued to a faint luminosity in the driver's window—a luminosity that gathered shape as it came nearer and nearer.

"Pete!" he gasped—and with that conscious effort of the mus-

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cles his brain regained control of his body and he rushed up the stairs, uncertain whether the train had stopped—knowing that if it came again it would stop and wait for him.

Jinny was awake and moving about the room when he returned. She glanced at his drawn face and knew what had happened.

"Seen it again?" she asked.

"Wot if I have?" he demanded.

"Nothing," she retorted.

She waited while he ate his supper in silence.

"George," she said, as he put down his cup for the last time.

"Well?"

"Suppose we knew for certain as Pete was *dead*"—she paused, but did not know enough to look at his mouth, and his eyes were turned from her—"why, then we—we could get spliced proper, couldn't we?"

Still avoiding her gaze he nodded.

"Suppose," she said, leaning across the table until her elbows touched his, "suppose we was to go about the banns to-morrer?"

Then did Raoul look up and meet the woman's gaze. In her eye there was nothing of accusation. But there was nothing of doubt.

"Right-o!" he said.

On the following morning they went together to the parish church and, being recommended thence to the vicarage, explained their needs. They learnt that they would have to wait for three Sundays before they could be married.

He was gloomy and depressed as they left the vicarage.

"Three weeks'll soon pass," she said, as if to console him.

"Aye," he grunted.

"An' you'll feel a lot better when it's done," she added.

To this he made no reply, and she did not labour the point. Indeed, it was the last veiled allusion she ever made to the subject.

On his way to the station he came across the loafer in the usual place outside the public house. The man shambled towards him ready with an excuse, but Raoul cut him short.

"Shan't be wantin' you no more," he said gruffly, and thereby burnt his boats behind him.

During the hours that passed between his going on duty in the early afternoon and his leaving the box after the passing of the twelve forty-five, he did not once repent having dispensed with the services of the loafer. True, his mind dwelt almost continuously on the ordeal before him. But Jinny had unconsciously given him a weapon when she had told him he would feel better when *it* was done.

That night, as he doused the eighth lamp, he turned and faced the tunnel.

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"I'm actin' square by 'er now, ain't I?" he shouted.

Then, for all the furious beating of his heart, he walked at a leisurely pace up the staircase, and so, completing his duties, into the street.

On the next night it was easier, and, with each night that brought his marriage nearer, his confidence grew. His nerve would falter sometimes, but always he managed to ascend the staircase one step at a time. Jinny was a secret tower of strength to him—so that all went reasonably well with him until, by the merest accident, the tower of strength crumbled.

Three Sundays had passed since their visit to the vicarage when the accident happened. The accident took the form of his meeting Mabel Owen as he was returning home from duty.

He had know Mabel in the Baker Street days before he had known Jinny—a fact of which Jinny was well aware. Mabel was returning from some unmentioned errand in the West End when she ran into him and exclaimed:

"Blessed if it ain't George Raoul! 'Ow goes it, George? Seems ages since we met, don't it! An' what might you be doin' in these parts?"

"I work over 'ere now," explained Raoul. "Cheyne Road. 'Ow goes it with you?"

Then, because he had no wish to appear churlish to a girl with whom he had once walked out, he invited her to an adjacent coffee stall.

He arrived at the tenement barely half an hour later than usual. But that half-hour was more than enough for Jinny.

"You're late, George," she said, as he came in.

"Sorry, Jinny," he replied. "Couldn't help meself. Met a friend as I was comin' off. Had to say a civil word to 'er."

"*'Er!*" repeated Jinny.

"Mabel Owen," he said—and his clumsy effort to say it casually fanned her suspicion.

"Oh!" shrilled Jinny. "So you keep me waitin' while you go gallivantin' about with that dressed up bit o' damaged goods!"

"You've no right to say that of Mabel," protested Raoul.

"No right!" she echoed. "Oh no! I've no right to say that of 'er, me livin' with you with no weddin' ring as you've given me. No better than 'er, I'm not. And don't you let me forget it neither, George Raoul!"

"Stow that, Jinny!" he commanded, with rising anger. "Ain't we fixed it up to get spliced proper day after tomorrer?"

The glint in his eye, partly of anger but partly also of fear, restrained her from further outburst and drove her indignation inwards so that she sulked.

She was still sulking on the fol-

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lowing day, compelling him to eat his midday meal in gloomy silence, wherefore he left home for work sooner than was necessary.

He was in the signal-box before he recognised that the secret tower of strength had crumbled as a result of the accident of his meeting Mabel Owen. Jinny had shown him a side of her nature that had been conspicuously absent in the earlier stages of his infatuation. And now his life was to become irrevocably linked with hers.

With the first taste of the bitterness of his sin came remorse; and with remorse came, with renewed strength, the terror which he had partly beaten back.

The terror began to grip him even before the stationmaster had left. In the signal-box he had formed the plan of telling the stationmaster that he could not turn out the lights that night—that he must hurry to the bedside of a dying child—any lie would do provided it saved him for that night. Tomorrow night he would be married to Jinny. He would have made what reparation lay in his power and would feel the safer.

"Good night, George."

"G'night, Mr. Jenkins."

The stationmaster hung the keys on the nail outside his den and walked off. Raoul would have called after him, but checked himself. The stationmaster would not believe that lie about the dying child. His face would betray his terror—his terror of the tunnel. The stationmaster would ask him why he was afraid of the tunnel, and—*God knew where those questions would lead!*

"Funny, it's worse'n ever tonight!" he said, as he finished the lights on the up-platform—for he was not analytical and did not wholly understand why the secret tower of strength had crumbled. He only knew that he did not want to marry Jinny on the following day. He only saw his sin in gaining possession of her—in the way that he had gained possession of her—in its naked hideousness.

The odd fatalism of his class prevented him from shirking the lights on the down-platform. What has to be will be. The same fatalism drove him ultimately to dousing the eighth lamp and turning, like a doomed rat, to face the already rumbling horror of the tunnel.

More slowly than before, as if it knew that he must wait for it, the train came on. Then in his ears sounded the familiar grinding of the brakes.

The train had stopped in the station. The faint luminosity in the driver's window grinned its welcome. Then it beckoned.

"I'm comin', Pete."

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From the corner by the staircase, where he had been crouching, he moved across the platform and boarded the train.

Dawn, breaking over the serried roofs of Chelsea, found Jinny sitting wide-eyed before the untouched meal she had prepared hours ago for Raoul.

As if the first faint streaks of light ended her vigil she dropped her face on her arms and burst into tears.

"Fool that I was! Why couldn't I 'ave 'eld me jore about Mabel Owen till we was spliced proper? And now he's left me, and Pete—"

The passion of weeping rose to its height, spent itself, and left her in another mood.

"'E needn't think 'e can get away as easy as all that," she muttered savagely. "If I'm a fool, he's a worse one—as 'e'll soon find."

At eight o'clock she washed herself and donned her black dress. Thus arrayed as a respectable woman of the working class she made her way to the nearest police station and asked for the Inspector.

"I'm Mrs. Peter Comber," she explained. "My husband used to be a driver on the Underground. Circle train, he druv."

She did not hesitate in her confession. She had weighed the cost of her revenge, and did not shrink from paying it.

"A man called George Raoul used to lodge with us—a signaller, 'e was, and worked at Baker Street. Me and 'im got friendly, if you understand, only I wouldn't 'ave nothing to do with him while I was livin' with my 'usband, not being that sort.

"'Bout a couple of months ago George come to me and says, 'Jinny,' he says, 'you won't see Pete no more,' he says. 'Why not?' I says. 'Cos he's gone off with Carrie Page,' he says. 'Chucked up his job and everythink,' he says; 'met him when we was bein' paid,' he says, 'an' he asked me to tell you quite friendly like,' he says."

"Look here," interrupted the Inspector, "we can't have anything to do with all this."

"You wait," replied Jinny, scarcely noticing the interruption. "As soon as George told me, I was that wild with my 'usbin that I let George take me off—me that had always been a respectable woman. Never entered my 'ead as he wasn't tellin' the truth. Next day George was turned on to Cheyne Road an' we come to live up 'ere.

"Well, first he begun tellin' me as he'd bin seein' things on the Underground. That started me thinkin'. I can put two an' two together, same as anyone else, an' I started takin' notice of what he was talking about in 'is sleep. And I tell you as sure as I stand here,

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George Raoul killed my 'usbin, and I dessay 'e's put 'im in one of the old holes in the Baker Street tunnel."

The Inspector began to take notes and to ask a number of questions.

"And now George has left you, I suppose, and that's why you've come along to us?" he suggested.

"He has left me," replied the woman. "But I only found all this out properly night before last, an' I couldn't be sure. I'd have come along 'ere any'ow."

The Inspector guessed that the last statement was a lie. But unless the man, when they caught him, definitely implicated the woman he knew that the Crown would not prosecute her.

"All right," he said. "We'll find George for you. Leave your address and call here to-morrow."

The Inspector, after instructing a plain-clothes man to shadow Jinny to her home, went to interview the Cheyne Road stationmaster.

On the following morning, when Jinny called at the police station, she was asked to examine a suit of clothing, a pocket knife, and a greasy case containing a number of small personal papers and other belongings.

"Yes, they're Pete's right enough, pore dear!" She burst into a flood of maudlin tears.

The Inspector waited unmoved. He believed not at all in the genuineness of Jinny's grief; but convention had its claims.

"Now, Mrs. Comber," he said presently, "I want you to dry your face and come along o' me.

"It's all right," he added. "Nothing's going to happen to you."

He took her for some distance in a taxi cab to a low, vault-like building near the river.

"Steady now," he warned her. "We're going to show you a dead body."

Someone removed a cloth, and at the same moment the Inspector demanded: "Who's that?"

"George Raoul!" gasped Jinny.

As the Inspector, taking her by the arm, led her from the room a question forced itself to her lips.

"You—you ain't 'ung him already?"

"No," replied the Inspector, with a grim laugh, "we ain't 'ung him. Wasn't needed. We found your husband in that disused hole, same as you said—and we found George Raoul alongside him—like that. Heart failure, the doctor says. Funny thing! As far as I can make out, he must have been skeered or something and run all the way through the tunnel from Cheyne Road to Baker Street where he done it. Must have been the running as did for his heart."

That, at any rate, was the explanation based on the findings of the Coroner's Court.

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A contributor to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine *and* The Atlantic, *who calls Mr. Queen "my literary mentor, poor man," makes his F&SF debut with a curious episode which is not the story you may think it is at first . . . or at second, either.*

The Vandals

by STEPHEN BARR

GEORGE DID SOMETHING AND THE door opened easy and we went in. There was a bright moon outside. On the right was the soda fountain: that was what we were here for. I had a flash and some matches.

"Want a soda, jerk?" George said. I told him to shut up and help get to work. We took the ice-cream cans and dumped them outside. Then we emptied the syrup containers into the sink. After that we washed all the glasses.

"OK," George said, "where's next?"

I looked at my list. "Thirty-two Market Street. We're on Market Street now and it numbers—"

"I know how it numbers. So come on."

It was a delicatessen and George opened one of the windows by doing something I didn't follow. I'm the mind, he's the muscle. Inside we had quite a job to do. Things in cans are safe, but the meat counter and the wiener department is something else. It took up two hours, mainly because George said we can't leave anything around the cats might find and eat. "Mice, too," he said, "and flies and ants."

"How about the drinking water?" I asked him.

"Safe," he told me. "Entirely safe. OK, double-dome, let's make the mark on this one." We took a china-marking crayon and wrote NUTS TO SMITTY on the outside of the window of Mr. Smith's store and left.

"Got any more food-sellers on the list?" George said. "Because we got to hit the city dump and then all night long the garbage cans. Brother!"

I told him no. He pulled a pack of cigarettes from the tight pocket of his levis—no match: he's the

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muscle. "Do we have to keep this up?" I asked him.

"Yes." He pulled me quick into a doorway. "Janie's coming down the street," George said this to me in a whisper past his cigarette. "We don't look right. Gimme a match."

Janie stopped right in front of us and sniffed. She said in a low voice: "All right. Come out with your grubby hands up." I started to but George pulled me back.

"What did you smell, Janie?" he asked.

She turned to him with a very friendly smile for a girl. "Oh, I don't know. Just you, I guess."

"Janie," George said, "don't ever do that again. You haven't been here as long as we have. Don't go and give us away. That wouldn't be right, Janie."

Janie couldn't see too good in the bad light, but she seemed to know George, and she said, "Are you two trying to do what we're supposed to be doing about the poison?" Her eyes got funny looking: far away, sort of.

George and I looked at each other. Is she or ain't she? I thought. We were supposed to be tough: after all that was the act we agreed on, but Janie was spoiling it. I hadn't ought to put the cologne on my hair: she'd smelled it like she was somebody's mother. Who the hell was Janie, anyway? She looked sort of familiar, especially when her eyes got that funny look in them.

"We have a mission," George said. "To kill the effect of this poison and save this planet." He looked very noble when he said it.

Janie said, "Oh, you and your dragons! I got to sit down." She looked real weak. "I feel funny. I feel really funny," she said, and sat down.

George said, "Well, I'm not laughing."

"Thanks, George," she said and lay down on her back.

"You maybe got the poison?" I asked her.

"Relax, Junior," she said. "Don't let's go on with this funny ha-ha. If you kids want to play cops and Rogers include me out." Pretty good, I thought. Fool anybody. Almost as good as George. George hadn't started the game though: I did.

George just suddenly turned up, and seemed to know all about it, except he needed steering. So it became George the muscle, me the brain. You start making a game of imagining things and the next thing you know you're believing it. The next stage is it *is* true, not just you believing: at least that's what George said.

I don't know how I first got the idea. Something I ate, my old man would say. Guys from Mars coming here and poisoning all the exposed food, only the poison doesn't kill you, it makes you

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afraid and be on their side. It spreads, so in time it's all over Terra, then they take over, only we come from Venus and try and stop them. I used to play the idea walking around town late at night when my old man thought I was in bed asleep. Mom died when I was a little kid, so he's the only one to worry. Then one night I'm looking in the window of the supermarket and George all of a sudden is standing next to me.

"Well, why don't you go ahead and do it, instead of thinking about it?" he says. Big guy, never seen him before.

"What are you, a mindreader?" I asked him. "I've never seen you before. You must be from out of town."

"More or less," he answered. That seemed to cover both questions. I looked him over more closely. Funny-looking eyes but otherwise just a big handsome football hero.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Crowding a couple of thousand, give or take a couple of centuries," he said. "Got a pain coming on. It's the air on this planet does it to us." The guy was good, he knew the game all right.

"This poison," I said. "It don't kill you. Or does it?"

"No, it don't kill you."

"Wonder what it's like being dead, huh?" I said. He thought this over.

"Well, I'll say this: it's not the way you think it's going to be."

"How come you're so smart all of a sudden?"

George didn't answer that: just grinned. He was good.

So we got into the supermarket —George seemed to have some trick with locks. I looked at him: Judas, I thought, this ain't right. George said, "Take it easy, chum. Your guess was correct, and we got to do this fast."

You know how it is with games: you get all worked up and the next thing you know it's the most important thing there is, and now a couple of hours later here we were in a doorway and this girl Janie lying on her back, moaning.

"You want to go back, Janie?" George said, "Is it too bad for you to stand?"

"No, no. I don't want to spoil the fun for you guys." She clutched herself and sat up, and she turned to me. "Very considerate of people, George is," she said. "You'd maybe never know it, but George here is a Limey."

"Yeah?" I said. "Well he don't talk like one."

"I already did the garbage cans," she said to George. "So all you got to do now is the dump."

I saw she was looking at me with that funny expression in the eyes. Where'd I seen that look before?

"How you doing in school,

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kid?" she asked me. "You like it there?" Pete's sake, I thought, what's it to her?

"What do you care?" I said. "That's not part of the game."

"No; that's not part of the game, kid. I just wanted to know is all." She gave me a sort of a warm smile.

"You don't have to call me 'kid,'" I told her. "You're not so old yourself. How old are you, anyway?"

She turned and looked at George for a minute, and I don't know: it made me feel kind of left out. Then she smiled at me again.

"Oh, I'm a kid too, I guess, where I come from. Thirty-five . . . thirty-seven; I forget."

That was better; more like the way the game was supposed to go.

"You don't look good, Janie," George said. "I think you better go back."

"Yeah," I said to her. "Back to Venus."

She gave me a very slow, sort of secret look. "It's not Venus, exactly," she said. "It's hard to say what it is. . . . You'll find out one day."

That was wacky, but it fitted all right.

"You're going back, Janie," George said. "Right now."

"Well . . ." she said to him. "I guess you two can finish up. I feel . . ." Then her voice trailed off. She gave me a funny little wink like just between us, but she didn't look too good. "Look after yourself . . . kid," she said. Then she laid back again, and I thought, Judas, she ain't kidding. George leaned over her and put his head against hers. She stiffened and then laid still.

"So come on," George told me.

"What do we do, just leave her there?" I asked him. He shook his head.

"She ain't there." I turned around to see if this was one of his jokes, but I couldn't see anything because of the shadow that covered the doorway.

Usually I'm not fond of girls. I can take 'em or leave 'em alone, but there's something about this Janie . . . But I followed George. There was something about him too.

"You really a Limey?" I asked him.

"Well, the English think I am," he said.

When we got to the city dump I could smell the poison: it was like mushrooms and old clothes.

"Got a match?" George asked me. What's with the guy, I thought, can't seem to keep matches.

"Say, I gave you a whole pack back on Market Street. What do you do, eat them?" His eyes got that funny look again. He smiled at me and nodded.

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"More or less. There's a lot of energy in match heads," he said. "But the point is, have you got a match?" I felt in the mackinaw and found a pack and handed it to him.

"Thanks, chum. *Mens agitat molem.*"

"What's that?" I asked him. "Pig Latin?"

"Nah, Third Century. It means Mind Moves the Mass: so watch this." He held the matches up against his head. Nothing happened. I watched him and nothing happened.

"Turn around." George said to me. I turned around and the dump wasn't there any more: just trees and a big hole. When I looked back at George he had that funny look in his eyes and he handed me the pack of matches. I looked inside and the match heads were all burned off, but no black marks. Judas, some trick!

"Too bad I couldn't do that with the food," he said. "Here's different: they threw it away and I can throw it farther. Lot of energy in match heads if you aim it right. So long, chum, tell the suckers from Mars hello." Then he wasn't there any more, and I walked home. Funny business.

I stopped playing the game after that: it didn't seem fun any more. I never saw George again, or Janie either, but I got a note from her—at least I guess it must have been from her. Funny way of sending you a note, too. It was written in the margin of my geometry in very small handwriting. It said:

Thanks for the help, kid.
Mother

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Michael Fessier made his literary debut with one of the small classics of American fantasy, the zany novella FULLY DRESSED AND IN HIS RIGHT MIND *(Knopf, 1935; reprinted Lion, 1954). Since then his highly successful magazine and film career has been chiefly devoted to more nearly possible subjects; but he returns occasionally to fantasy, as if to demonstrate that he still possesses as enviably light and deft a touch as you can find in the field.*

The Blue-Eyed Horse

by MICHAEL FESSIER

WHEN DAN Q. MCCAFFERY returned to his pleasant little home that fateful night, he would have been shocked if anyone had suggested that he enter himself as a starter in the hundred-thousand-dollar Santa Marita Derby. Mr. McCaffery was a two-legged male of thirty-one. He had crisp brown hair and his appearance was prepossessing even though a trifle indolent. His eyes were blue and deceptively innocent. Horse racing was not his career but his avocation. He was an insurance salesman.

Mr. McCaffery entered the cheerful living room, tossed his hat onto a table and called out lustily, "Haloo, there. What's to eat?"

Watson, his nine-year-old son, did not look up. He was reading a comic book. "Take it easy, Pop," he said. "This is a tense moment. Little Awful Arnie's about to be skewered by pirates."

"What odds will you take?" asked Mr. McCaffery, interested.

"Aw, I know they won't give her the main dose," Watson said, "But I keep on reading, just in hopes."

Jennie McCaffery entered the room. She was small, blonde and adorable, and therefore Mr. McCaffery adored her. Despite ten years of marriage she appeared hardly more than twenty, and people often mistook her for Watson's sister. Tonight there was a steely glint in her violet eyes.

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"Did I hear you mention food?" she asked.

Mr. McCaffery kissed her fondly. "You sure did," he said. "I could eat a horse."

"That," said Mrs. McCaffery, "is just what you deserve."

"What have I done *now*?" Mr. McCaffery asked his wife in a pained voice.

"I called the office today," said Mrs. McCaffery. "Your secretary said you haven't so much as hung up your hat there in a week. What have you been doing to earn a living?"

"Well," said Mr. McCaffery defensively, "I sold a health-insurance policy just this afternoon."

"And what did you do with the commission you earned?" Mrs. McCaffery asked suspiciously.

"Well," said Mr. McCaffery unhappily, "there was a horse named Zip in the fifth at Hollywood Park. He was a sure thing. I've seen him run before. Fast? Why, that horse's got wings."

"He should have," commented Watson. "He's a beetle."

Mr. McCaffery looked at him sourly and then turned to Jennie. "Something happened," he went on. "I don't know what, but we got beat out by a nose."

"That's the pattern of my life," said Jennie wearily. "Other women have fine clothes and fine cars and fine homes, but not me. Do you want to know why? It's because I'm always beaten out by a nose." Frowning, she fondled the lid of the old Irish teapot her old Irish grandmother had sent her from Ireland. "Dan," she said fiercely, "if you ever lose another dollar of our money betting on horses, I—I hope you turn into a horse."

The next morning Dan Q. McCaffery went into Harry's Horse Parlor, sniffed the heady odor of stale cigar stubs, and was greeted by his cronies, including his neighbor Pete Haggerty.

"Hiya, Pete, old sock," he said jovially. "How you doing?"

"I'm doing lousy," grumbled Pete. "These days I couldn't pick a winner from yesterday's paper. My wife's got some kinda pipeline in here and she knows to the dime what I'm losing."

Together they studied the chart and selected Johnny Jumpup at ten-to-one in the fifth. They did not play the first four races, and as they were run off, Mr. McCaffery had time to notice two strangers in the place. They were both small, furtive characters and could have been pickpockets, con men or utterly respectable produce dealers. He lost interest in them during the fifth race, which wasn't even exciting until the very last. Johnny Jumpup got a five-length lead and maintained it easily into the stretch. Then, out of nowhere, came Caledonia to win by a nose.

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"I can't go home," Pete Haggerty said, moaning. "My wife'll kill me."

But Mr. McCaffery didn't hear him. Instead, he heard his own wife's voice, and she was saying, "I hope you turn into a horse."

A strange feeling came over him. He was slightly feverish and what he needed, he decided, was a couple of aspirin.

The other gamblers felt that the room had suddenly become unreasonably crowded, and then they realized why. Standing in their midst was a horse, a blue-eyed white horse, who was returning their astonished stares with calm detachment.

"Why, there seems to be a horse in here," remarked Mr. Browning, unbelievingly.

"There sure is," declared Mr. Whittaker, and he turned to Harry, proprietor of the parlor. "Aren't you going a bit too far?" he said.

"I swear I don't know how that horse got in here," said Harry, beginning to perspire around the hairline. "I know *I* didn't bring him in."

"Dan—Dan McCaffery," cried Pete Haggerty in a frightened voice. "Where are you?"

"Here I am," said Mr. McCaffery, who couldn't comprehend all this talk about a horse inasmuch as *he* saw no horse. "I'm right beside you."

"The hell you are," said Pete.

And then Dan Q. McCaffery understood what had happened to him, and he realized that a couple of aspirin would not help. He looked down at his two white forelegs and somewhere in the rear he felt a tail swishing. "Holy cats," he said, and the voice wasn't at all like a horse's voice; it sounded just like his own.

"Who said that?" asked Mr. Whittaker.

"Look, gentlemen," Harry pleaded, "you're overwrought. This horse is just a stray. I'm gonna call the cops."

"Oh, no, you aren't," Mr. McCaffery said as he backed toward the door.

If he had to be a horse, he didn't want to begin by having a brush with the law. He needed to be alone, to think and to adjust to his new condition. He went out the door and started ambling down the sidewalk, to the consternation of pedestrians. At his heels trotted the two suspicious-looking little strangers whom Mr. McCaffery had noticed in the horse parlor. They were Waldo and Wilbur Snope, and they were brothers.

"What're we shagging that silly-looking nag for?" asked Wilbur.

"He may be a silly-looking nag," replied Waldo, "but I been around tracks long enough to know he's a race horse. He's got wind and limb. Lookit dat stride."

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"What's in it for us?" asked Wilbur.

"He's a stray, ain't he?" Waldo said. "All we gotta do is catch him and we've got ourselves a race horse."

As Mr. McCaffery turned homeward, the Snope brothers trotted along a block behind him.

Jennie McCaffery was tending her rosebushes when she became conscious of a strange presence in the yard. Finally she looked up and gasped. "Well, well," she said. "A horse. And what a pretty horse, all white and with such darling blue eyes."

Mr. McCaffery beamed. This was the first time he had drawn praise in his new status as a horse. He took her ear between his lips and tweaked it.

"Heavens," exclaimed Jennie. "What a way for a horse to act. What a way for *anyone* to act."

Watson came running up, his eyes wild with excitement. "Golly, Mom," he said, "where'd we get the horse? He's swell."

"Why, thank you, Watson," said Mr. McCaffery, pleased.

"He sure is a polite horse, isn't he?" commented Watson.

"Well, maybe," Jennie conceded, "but don't you think he's a bit unusual?"

"Come to think of it, he is," Watson agreed. Then he stared at the horse and his eyes widened. "Did you notice," he asked his mother, "that this horse talks just like Pop? Looks like him, too."

"I've just begun to realize that," said Jennie. "Why, I do believe it *is* your father. How'd you get to be a horse, Dan?"

"I don't rightly know," Mr. McCaffery declared. "But it seems to me you had something to do with it."

"Oh, dear," cried Jennie impulsively. "I really didn't mean for you to turn into a horse, Dan."

"Well, that's what you get for popping off," Mr. McCaffery told her brusquely. "Now I *am* a horse and I hope you're satisfied."

Jennie's sense of fair play and justice was outraged by Mr. McCaffery's attitude. "That's right, blame *me*," she said bitterly. "I suppose it's *my* fault that you've gambled away every dollar you've ever earned. Why, if I didn't have a small income from my aunt, we wouldn't even have a roof over our heads, or—" Then a thought struck her and she turned to Watson. "Do you think we can get him a job pulling a milk wagon?" she asked.

"Would you condemn the father of your child to be a beast of burden?" asked Mr. McCaffery, horrified.

"Well," said his wife reasonably, "we've got to eat. And besides, you brought this on yourself, you know."

"I don't think Pop'd be a success as a milk-wagon horse," Watson said. "He'd never be able

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to remember the route." He looked at his father closely. "But I got an idea he might be able to do some tall running on a race track. Look at those withers."

"H'm," Jennie said, looking at her husband with a new light in her eyes.

"What're you thinking of?" demanded Mr. McCaffery uneasily. "I thought you were opposed to horse racing, Jennie."

"I am—from a betting standpoint," said Jennie.

"Did you ever see a horse coming down the stretch with a jockey beating the daylights out of him with a bat?" Mr. McCaffery asked.

"Don't worry, honey," said Mrs. McCaffery. "We'll get you a nice, kind jockey with just a little teeny-weeny bat." She turned to her son. "Watson," she said, "I think we'd better tie your father in the garage."

Mr. McCaffery made no attempt to resist as Watson improvised a halter out of a piece of rope and tied him to an upright in the garage. His spirit was crushed.

As soon as Jennie and Watson went back to the house, Waldo and Wilbur Snope, the two furtive race-horse fanciers, entered the garage.

"What do you two little punks want?" demanded Mr. McCaffery crossly.

"You," declared Wilbur, giving the halter a vicious tug, "and dere ain't a horse born which can call *me* a little punk."

"Me neither," said Waldo. "A good horsewhipping is what you need."

"Just try it," said Mr. McCaffery furiously. He rose up on his hind legs and assumed a boxing stance. "Put 'em up," he commanded.

This was too much for the Snope brothers. They uttered weak moans of consternation and turned and fled the premises.

"And now," said Mr. McCaffery complacently to himself, "we'll see about this business of making a race horse out of me."

The next afternoon Jennie McCaffery walked alone into the almost deserted clubhouse at Santa Marita, one of California's most pretentious horse plants. She found the office of the racing secretary and entered. A handsome, blond young man was the only occupant of the office. "I beg your pardon," said Jennie hesitantly. "I would like some information."

"I would too," the young man said. "I—my name is Bayard Rassendale. What's yours?" His intense look of admiration caused Jennie to blush.

"Jennie," she said. "I want to know how you go about entering a horse to race at Santa Marita."

"The racing secretary isn't

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here," said Bayard. "I'm just an assistant, but perhaps I can help. Wait until I slip into something comfortable, such as a hat, then we'll run down to the bar and discuss this matter thoroughly."

"No," said Jennie. "Perhaps I'd better come back when the racing secretary's here."

"All right," Bayard said resignedly. "What's the name of this horse you wish to enter?"

"McCaffery," said Jennie. "Dan Q. McCaffery."

"What an odd name for a horse," said Bayard. "I don't believe I ever heard of a horse by that name."

"Well," said Jennie, "he hasn't been a horse very long. He used to be my husband."

"Somehow I feel that our romance is ill-fated," said Bayard. "A great gulf yawns between us. One of us is nuts."

"Perhaps you'd better come down and meet my horse—I mean my husband," Jennie said. "He's downstairs with my son, Watson."

"What does Watson look like?" asked Bayard apprehensively.

"Like any other small boy, of course," said Jennie.

"Well, that's a relief." Bayard said, sighing. "Come on, beautiful."

Mr. McCaffery, saddled and bridled, was idly munching rose petals when Jennie and Bayard strolled out of the clubhouse, and Watson was standing nearby. Both he and his father looked sourly at the handsome young man accompanying Jennie.

"Dan," Jennie said to her husband, "this is Mr. Rassendale of the racing secretary's staff."

"How do you do?" said Bayard, smirking. "This is the first time I've ever been introduced to a horse. Don't bother shaking hands. It would look silly if someone saw us."

"Looking silly must be a chronic condition with you," snapped Mr. McCaffery. "I wouldn't wear a mustache like yours even to save my upper lip from frostbite."

"I've got a TL for you too," Bayard said. "But, what makes you think you're a race horse? Looks to me as if you should be hauling a junk wagon."

"Come on, Pop," Watson said to his father. "Let's go for a trial run, say six furlongs, and show this wise guy."

Waldo and Wilbur Snope had followed Jennie, Watson and Mr. McCaffery to the park. Hidden beyond shrubbery, they watched as Watson walked Mr. McCaffery to the far side of the track and set him off. Mr. McCaffery started slowly at first and then began to get interested in his work. He lengthened his stride and streaked past the quarter pole. The wind felt good as it whistled past his ears. It was an exhilarating experience.

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At the finish line Watson pulled him up, turned him, and he came prancing back to where Jennie and Bayard were standing. "How'd I do?" asked Mr. McCaffery.

"Sensational," Bayard said enthusiastically. "If you could run the mile at that rate, you'd be a cinch to take the hundred-thousand-dollar Santa Marita Handicap."

"Shouldn't we give him a few warmup races first?" asked Watson.

"If we do," Bayard replied, "somebody's sure to get wise to him. He's only good for one time out and we might as well aim at the top. It's the Santa Marita or nothing."

"Who cut you in on this deal?" asked Mr. McCaffery sarcastically.

"Don't get uppish about it," Bayard said. "You're going to need me more than you realize. Do you think it's easy to enter a horse with no antecedents, no registry and no record in the Santa Marita Derby? I may have to manipulate a few documents." What he meant was that he intended to forge the documents, but he wisely refrained from saying so on the theory that perhaps Jennie might boggle at anything illegal. "Of course," he went on, "I'll expect my share."

"Of course you will," said Mr. McCaffery bitterly.

"Take him home and keep him under cover," Bayard told Jennie. "I'll get a van and we'll exercise him early in the morning at an abandoned track I know. Above all, make him keep his big mouth shut."

Mr. McCaffery trained faithfully at the abandoned track for over a month. At first he enjoyed himself. Running just for the sake of speed and excitement was a new and thrilling experience. Then the whole business began to pall on him. He began to resent being wakened at four in the morning and carted across town in a van.

His main worry, however, was the seemingly growing intimacy between Bayard Rassendale and Jennie. They were together most of the time at the track, and in the evenings Mr. McCaffery could look through the garage window and see Bayard come to the house. Always Bayard carried a brief case. Always the visits were strictly business—or were they?

"I know what's bothering you," Bayard told Mr. McCaffery one day. "If I were a horse and I had a pretty young wife like Jennie, I'd worry too." And then, while Mr. McCaffery chomped his bit in futile rage, Bayard walked off, chuckling fiendishly.

One night Jennie did not visit Mr. McCaffery in the garage. She went for a ride with Bayard in

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his automobile, and he parked on a moonlit bluff overlooking the ocean.

"You know, Jennie," said Bayard, "you're putting on a brave front, but you can't fool me. I know it's tough on you having a horse for a husband."

"It has its drawbacks," Jennie admitted, "but there are compensations. His being a horse does keep him out of Harry's Horse Parlor."

"Anyone taking advantage of you in your situation would be a heel, of course," declared Bayard. "And I'm *such* a heel." He took her hand and caressed it gently.

"I think," said Jennie coldly, "we'd better go home now."

The reason Jennie didn't visit her husband that night was that she was ashamed to face him. She had been tempted, just for a moment, by Bayard—the heel!

Later on that same night Pete Haggerty crept out of his house in his stocking feet. He went out into the yard, stepped over the fence and headed for the McCaffery garage. As his wife watched from the window, Haggerty approached the garage and hissed. "Pst," he said. "Dan. Dan McCaffery."

Mr. McCaffery stuck his head out the window and stared coldly at his old friend.

"Ah, there you are, Dan," said Haggerty. "And you *are* Dan, I know. I should of recognized you that day in Harry's Horse Parlor, but I was too scared. Speak to me, Dan."

Mr. McCaffery noticed Mrs. Haggerty sneaking across the yard in back of her husband, and he decided to dummy up.

"Come on, Dan," Haggerty urged, "be a pal. Spill the dope. Are you gonna win the Santa Marita?"

Mr. McCaffery pretended to be eating the leaves off a branch that hung down near the garage window. He paid no attention to Pete Haggerty, but he watched Mrs. Haggerty out of the corner of his eye.

"Oh," said Haggerty nastily, "you're not gonna talk, huh? Well, how'd you like a good bust in the snoot? I'll can your carcass and feed you to fox terriers. I'll—"

Mrs. Haggerty touched Pete on the shoulder and he turned to face her, his mouth open but emitting no sound. "Pete, dear," she cooed, "I don't believe that nasty old stuck-up horse wants to talk to you. Well, you come home with me. *I'll* talk to you." With that she caught him by the seat of the trousers and the scruff of the neck and marched him across the yard.

"I'll get you for this, Dan McCaffery," bellowed Haggerty. "So help me Hannah, I will."

On the day of the Santa Marita Derby, Dan McCaffery was trans-

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ported to the track in the van and installed in his quarters. Jennie and Watson remained with him until it was time to take him to the paddock, after which he plodded with the other horses to the starting gate.

There was a tense moment and then the barriers were sprung. Mr. McCaffery got off to a good start but promptly slowed up his pace. There were a few speed-burners in the race and he decided to let them wear themselves out before he made his bid. He was running seventh at the first turn and had not improved his position at the half. The jockey took his whip and lashed Mr. McCaffery's flanks with it. Mr. McCaffery twisted his head around so far that it appeared he was trying to climb into his own saddle. "You use that bat on me again and I'll tear your leg off at the hip," he said.

The whip dropped from the jockey's grasp. For the rest of the race all he did was hang on and try to pray.

Mr. McCaffery had lost ground during his conversation with the jockey. He was now running ninth. He put on a burst of speed and passed several rivals; and as they entered the stretch he drew almost even with the leader, Hannibal, with Jockey Glenn Grig up. Try as he would, Mr. McCaffery could not quite draw even with Hannibal, let alone go ahead. In exasperation, he bared his teeth and leaned as close as possible to Glenn Grig.

"All right, cousin," he said. "Are you going to pull up, or shall I rip those pretty pink panties off you?"

Glenn dropped the reins, and before he could retrieve them Mr. McCaffery had pounded across the finish line, winner by a neck.

Inasmuch as the judges had seen nothing wrong, the race was declared official and the sign was flashed. Mr. McCaffery was led prancing into the winner's circle to be greeted by Jennie, Watson and Bayard.

Jennie threw her arms around Mr. McCaffery and kissed his nose. "Oh, Dan," she cried. "You did it. We're rich, darling."

Even Watson's usual caution was overcome by his jubilation. "Nice going, Pop," he said and leaned down to shake hands with his father. Mr. McCaffery gave him a hoof and winked triumphantly.

The chief steward and his assistants were watching the proceedings with interest. "There's something fishy about that horse," said the chief.

Pete Haggerty, his heart filled with hatred, thrust his way through the crowd. "Horse my elbow," he snorted. "Don't let that gluepot's outward appearance fool you. He's a married man and the father of the kid that was here."

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The chief steward's eyes were glassy. "Maybe we'd better go have a talk with that horse," he said.

The whole delegation trooped down to Mr. McCaffery's stall. Watson was rubbing his father down and Jennie was holding the winner's wreath, smelling the flowers. "Madam," said the chief, swallowing hard, "if this sounds crazy to you, think how it sounds to me, but I've got to ask you a question: Is Dan Q. McCaffery a horse or is he your husband?"

"Why," said Jennie, "you might say he's both." And then she got a warning look from Bayard Rassendale. "That is," she stammered, "I hardly know what to say."

"And I don't blame you," said Haggerty nastily. "Considering the way you've been carrying on with Bayard Rassendale."

Mr. McCaffery felt as if a dagger had been thrust into his heart. He no longer cared who knew his secret. "What do you mean by that?" he demanded of Haggerty.

"Ha," said Haggerty. "The husband's the last to know! What'd you expect, Dan? What good's a horse as a husband? You ain't even good as a horse any more. You'll be barred from every track in the land."

Mr. McCaffery turned to his wife. "Have you anything to say for yourself?" he demanded.

Jennie's heart was broken. In addition to that, her pride was sorely wounded. "No," she said.

"That," said Mr. McCaffery, "is all I wanted to know. You're not going to Bayard's arms with money I worked my hoofs to the quick to earn." He faced the chief, who, although slap-happy, was still riding the punches. "I'll come clean," he said. "I'll admit I'm a ringer and that I had no right in the race. If you want to know how I got in, look up Mr. Rassendale's forged papers. Anyway, I don't want any part of the hundred-thousand-dollar purse for myself or my family or any stray friends of my family. I suggest that you turn the money over to charity."

Mr. McCaffery nodded to his son. "Come on, Watson," he said, "ride Papa home, will you?" He carefully kicked Haggerty in the belly, knocking his old friend cold, and then trotted off with Watson up.

Pale and perspiring, the demoralized officials went on to the clubhouse, where an emergency meeting was called. It was decided to accept Mr. McCaffery's suggestion and donate the purse to charity. Of course nothing could be done about the parimutuel tickets: the betters had already collected.

It was also decided to do nothing about Bayard Rassendale except to fire him. There were aspects to the case that, if given a

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public hearing, would end racing in the state forever. The last action taken by the committee was to give the chief steward a six-month vacation.

As darkness crept on, Mr. McCaffery stood alone in the garage, hoping against hope that Jennie would come out and convince him there was no reason for him to distrust her. In the meantime, Jennie sat in the living room, hoping against hope that Mr. McCaffery would come to the window and apologize for unfounded suspicions. Probably one or the other would have given in and there would have been a reconciliation—but fate, in the person of two runty crooks, intervened. The door to the garage opened and in came Waldo and Wilbur Snope, carrying lengths of rope, flashlights and other equipment.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Mr. McCaffery.

"You," said Waldo. "We're gonna get you, too."

"What would you do with me?" Mr. McCaffery asked. "I'm a hot horse."

"Sure, sure," said Waldo, "but you're fast enough to win da Santa Marita Derby and you're worth dough. We're gonna dye you black and bootleg you around."

"And don't argue with us," Wilbur warned with a determined ring to his voice. Defeated, Mr. McCaffery stood apathetically as they saddled and bridled him.

During the first week of Mr. McCaffery's absence, Jennie clung to the hope that her husband would return any day. Then came the second week and, influenced by the subtle propaganda of Bayard Rassendale, Jennie became convinced that she would never see Mr. McCaffery again.

"We'll just have to face it," said Bayard. "He's barred as a race horse and he's simply too lazy to pull a milk wagon. He's abandoned you."

"I'm afraid you're right," Jennie said with a sigh. "What shall I do?"

"You've always got me," said Bayard tenderly.

"I know," Jennie said. "But I'll have to have time to think it over, Bayard."

"I'd counted on that," said Bayard. "So I've arranged for a perfect place for you to think. My mother and married sister have a place near Reno, Nevada. You could stay with them, and when and if you make up your mind, it's not far to the courthouse."

Finally there came a night when Jennie was in her bedroom putting the finishing touches to her packing. She closed the suitcase, turned out the light, breathed a nostalgic farewell to the scene of so much past happi-

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ness and went into the living room. Watson was placing cups and saucers on the tea table.

"Why, Watson, dear," said Jennie, pleased. "You've prepared tea. How thoughtful of you."

"That heel that's supposed to take Pop's place in your affections isn't due for an hour yet," said Watson. "I thought this might pass the time away." Jennie sat at the table and Watson served her. "Say, Mom," he said after a while, "remember the good old days?"

"What good old days?" inquired Jennie uneasily.

"The Saturday nights, especially," Watson said dreamily. "Remember when Pop'd come home from Harry's Horse Parlor busted and we'd hock his watch and have a picnic right here in the living room, roasting wieners in the fireplace on account of the gas was turned off for nonpayment?"

"Yes," said Jennie softly. "I remember." She closed her eyes and it seemed that a fire glowed in the fireplace and that the smell of burned wieners was in the air.

"Gosh, Mom," Watson continued, "Pop was probably the worst handicapper that ever ignored a form sheet, but doggone it, I just can't help loving the guy."

Jennie remained silent for some time. "Doggone it," she said finally, "neither can I." She ran her hand over the lid of the old Irish teapot. "Oh, dear," she sighed, "I wish Dan weren't a horse any more. I wish he'd come home to us."

Not far away, in an abandoned barn where he'd been kept prisoner for two weeks, Mr. McCaffery stood in his stall and watched while Wilbur and Waldo stirred dye into a washtub. He had given up hope that somebody would come looking for him, and he'd decided that he was probably the most unloved and unwanted horse in the world—when a sudden reversal of feelings came over him. Something had given his spirits a lift. He felt cheerful and gay.

Wilbur and Waldo dragged the tub of dye over to the stall and began dipping paintbrushes into the liquid.

"I wouldn't bother doing that if I were you," Mr. McCaffery said to them pleasantly.

Wilbur looked up and then dropped his paintbrush. "Who're you," he demanded, "and where's our horse?"

"The FBI has many secrets," said Mr. McCaffery cryptically. "Pardon me while I go get a warrant for your arrest." He dusted off his trousers, waved airily at the brothers and strolled out of the barn.

"And to think," said Waldo bitterly, "that all this time we been buying oats for a federal cop."

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"I got an idea that we better blow town," Wilbur said.

Jennie had started to put away the teacups when she heard the sound of the door opening. She didn't lift her head, pretending to be busily scraping crumbs off the tablecloth. "Is that you, Bayard?" she asked, and didn't wait for an answer. "I'm sorry, Bayard," she went on. "I can't go with you. I know my husband's no bargain; he's a confirmed gambler and he couldn't sell insurance to the inmates of condemned row. But I love him and I'm going to wait for him to come back, even as a horse."

Then she looked up and saw Mr. McCaffery standing in the doorway.

He was coming toward her, reaching for her—not with hoofs but with eager hands. She went into his arms and started to cry.

When Mr. McCaffery had kissed Jennie for the seventeenth time, he had to pause for breath. "My, my," he said, "it's certainly wonderful not to be a horse any more."

"Ah; it's heavenly," she said, "just to have you as your own old self again."

"You're wrong there," said Mr. McCaffery. "I'm not going to be my old self any more. I'm going to be the most conscientious insurance salesman there ever was. I'm going to keep my hands to the plow and my nose out of Harry's Horse Parlor. From now on, it's going to be all business with me."

Jennie stared at him, and it seemed he was almost a stranger to her. She could visualize him standing in a thousand doorways, his foot planted firmly in the opening, and with that implacable look of the demon insurance salesman in his eyes. And then she could see him coming home, tired but still a slave to duty, spending long cheerless hours toting up his commissions. Without realizing what she was doing, she picked up the teapot and distractedly rubbed the lid.

"Oh, no," she said, "not that. I just want you to be as you always have been: hardly worth your salt, unreliable and unpredictable, but sweet and loving and lovable. . . ."

The old languid look came back into Mr. McCaffery's eyes, the stern lines of his mouth were softened into an infectious grin and his momentarily erect frame relaxed into its accustomed nonchalant slump.

With a cry of joy Jennie threw her arms around him. The teapot fell to the floor, where it shattered into a thousand pieces.

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Just a month after I first read Theory of Rocketry, *and a little over two months before you will be reading it, Cyril Kornbluth died of a sudden heart attack. Kornbluth was still a young man, although he had been writing successfully for most of two decades. As an eager teen-ager, he sold innumerable stories (often of astonishingly high quality) to various magazines under assorted by-lines. In his mid-twenties he felt (one guesses) that he had advanced enough as a writer to use his own name, and immediately established his status by signing it to three classics which every enthusiast of s.f. must know almost by heart:* The Little Black Bag (Astounding, *July, 1950),* The Silly Season *(F&SF, Fall, 1950) and* The Mindworm (World's Beyond, *December, 1950). He went on from distinguished shorts to distinguished novels (by himself and in collaboration) and became unquestionably one of s.f.'s top creators in the 1950's, almost uniquely able (perhaps his closest rival was the late Henry Kuttner . . .) to combine scientific and sociological extrapolation, perceptive character study, highly literate prose, and rousing adventurous storytelling, in so perfect a fusion that all of these qualities were present in every paragraph. One can pay no more fitting tribute to a dead writer than to perform some service to keep his books alive: at the end of this story you will find a (I trust) complete Kornbluth bibliography—and if you fail to read every book on it, you will be missing a great deal of the best s.f. writing (and some of the best writing, unclassified) of our time.*

In his shorter works, Kornbluth was particularly noted for what might be called not so much future-fiction as fiction of the future. That is, the stories which might appear in a quality magazine 20 years from now, dealing (apparently) only with people, their characters and problems, and not at all with scientific thinking and extrapolation—and yet, by the very nature of character and problem, brilliantly illuminating that segment of the future . . . and a few crannies of the present as well. Among the most notable of these have been The Goodly Creatures *(F&SF, December, 1952),* The Altar at Midnight (Galaxy, *November, 1952), and now this latest and, God help us, probably last story.*

(NOTE: *All of the stories mentioned above may be found in Kornbluth's collection* THE MINDWORM.)

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Theory of Rocketry

by C. M. KORNBLUTH

MR. EDEL TAUGHT SIX ENGLISH classes that year at Richard M. Nixon High School, and the classes averaged 75 pupils each. That was 450 boys and girls, but Mr. Edel still tried to have the names down cold by at least the third week of the semester. As English 308 stormed into his room he was aware that he was not succeeding, and that next year he would even stop trying, for in 1978 the classes would average 82 pupils instead of 75.

One seat was empty when the chime sounded; Mr. Edel was pleased to notice that he remembered whose it was. The absent pupil was a Miss Kahn, keyed into his memory by "Kahn-stipaded," which perhaps she was, with her small pinched features centered in a tallow acre of face. Miss Kahn slipped in some three seconds late; Edel nodded at his intern, Mrs. Giovino, and Mrs. Giovino coursed down the aisle to question, berate and possibly to demerit Miss Kahn. Edel stood up, the Modern Revised Old Testament already open before him.

"*You're blessed,*" he read, "*if you're excused for your wrongdoing and your sin is forgiven. You're blessed if God knows that you're not evil and sly any more. I, King David, used to hide my sins from God while I grew old and blustered proudly all day. But all day and all night too your hand was heavy on me, God. . . .*"

It would be the flat, crystal-clear, crystal-blank M.R.O.T. all this week; next week he'd read (with more pleasure) from the Roman Catholic Knox translation; the week after that, from the American Rabbinical Council's crabbed version heavy with footnotes; and the week after that, back to M.R.O.T. Thrice blessed was he this semester that there were no Moslems, Buddhists, militant atheists or miscellaneous cultists to sit and glower through the reading or exercise their legal right to wait it out in the corridor. This semester the classes were All-American: Protestant, Catholic, Jewish—choice of one.

"Amen," chorused the class and they sat down; two minutes of his fifty-minute hour were gone forever.

Soft spring was outside the windows, and they were restless.

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Mr. Edel "projected" a little as he told them: "This is the dreaded three-minute impromptu speech for which English Three Oh Eight is notorious, young ladies and gentlemen. The importance of being able to speak clearly on short notice should be obvious to everybody. You'll get nowhere in your military service if you can't give instructions and verbal orders. You'll get less than nowhere in business if you can't convey your ideas crisply and accurately." A happy thought struck him: great chance to implement the Spiritual Values Directive. He added: "You may be asked to lead in prayer or say grace on short notice." (He'd add *that* one to his permanent repertoire; it was a natural.) "We are not asking the impossible. Anybody can talk interestingly, easily and naturally for three minutes if they try. Miss Gerber, will you begin with a little talk on your career plans?"

Miss Gerber ("Grapefruit" was the mnemonic) rose coolly and driveled about the joys of motherhood until Mrs. Giovino passed her card to Edel and called time.

"You spoke freely, Miss Gerber, but perhaps not enough to the point," said Edel. "I'm pleased, though, that you weren't bothered by any foolish shyness. I'm sure everybody I call on will be able to talk right up like you did." (He liked that "*like*" the way you like biting on a tooth that aches; *he'd* give them Artificial Grammar Deemphasis . . .) "Foster, may we hear from you on the subject of your coming summer vacation?" He jotted down a *C* for the Grapefruit.

Foster ("Fireball") rose and paused an expert moment. Then, in a firm and manly voice he started with a little joke ("if I survive English Three Oh Eight"), stated his theme ("a vacation is not a time for idling and wasted opportunity"), developed it ("harvest crew during the day for *physical*—my Science Search project during the evenings for *mental*"), elevated it ("no excuse for neglecting one's regular attendance at one's place of worship") and concluded with a little joke ("should be darned glad to get back to school!").

The speech clocked 2:59; it was masterly; none of the other impromptus heard that morning came close to it.

"And," said Mr. Edel at lunch to his semi-crony Dr. Fuqua, Biology, "between classes I riffled through the grade cards again and found I'd marked him *F*. Of course I changed it to *A*. The question is, *why*?"

"Because you'd made a mistake," said Fuqua absently. Something was on his mind, thought Edel.

"No, no. Why did I make the mistake?"

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"Well, Freud, in *The Psychology of Everyday—*"

"Roland, please, I know all that. Assume I do. Why do I unconsciously dislike Foster? I should get down on my knees and thank God for Foster."

Fuqua shook his head and began to pay attention. "Foster?" he said. "You don't know the half of it. I'm his faculty adviser. Quite a boy, Foster."

"To me, just a name, a face, a good recitation every time. You know: seventy-five to a class. What's he up to here at dear old Tricky Dicky?"

"Watch the funny jokes, Edel," said Fuqua, alarmed.

"Sorry. It slipped out. But Foster?"

"Well, he's taking an inhuman pre-engineering schedule. Carrying it with ease. Going out for all the extra-curricular stuff the law allows. R.O.T.C. Drill Team, Boxing Squad, Math Club, and there I had to draw the line. He wanted on the Debating Team too. I've seen him upset just once. He came to me last year when the school dentist wanted to pull a bad wisdom tooth he had. He made me make the dentist wait until he had a chance to check the dental requirements of the Air Force Academy. They allow four extractions, so he let the dentist yank it. Fly boy. Off we go into the whatsit. He wants it bad."

"I see. Just a boy with motivation. How long since you've seen one, Roland?"

Dr. Fuqua leaned forward, his voice low and urgent. "To hell with Foster, Dave. I'm in trouble. Will you help me?"

"Why, of course, Roland. How much do you need?" Mr. Edel was a bachelor, and had found one of the minor joys of that state to be "tiding over" his familied friends.

"Not that kind of trouble, Dave. Not yet. They're sharpening the ax for me. I get a hearing this afternoon."

"Good God! What are you supposed to have done?"

"Everything. Nothing. It's one of those 'best interests' things. Am I taking the Spiritual Values Directive *seriously* enough? Am I *thinking* about patting any adolescent fannies? Exactly *why* am I in the lowest quarter for my seniority-group with respect to voluntary hours of refresher summer courses? Am I *happy* here?"

Edel said: "These things always start somewhere. Who's out to get you?"

Fuqua took a deep breath and said in a surprisingly small voice: "Me, I suppose."

"Oh?"

Then it came out with a rush. "It was the semester psychometrics. I'd been up all night almost fighting with Beth. She does *not* understand how to handle a fifteen-year-old boy—never mind. I felt sardonic so I did something

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sardonic. And stupid. Don't ever get to feeling sardonic, Dave. I took the psychometric and I checked their little boxes and I told the god-damned truth right down the line. I checked them where I felt like checking them and not where a prudent biology teacher *ought* to check them."

"You're dead," Mr. Edel said after a pause.

"I thought I could get a bunch of the teachers to say they lie their way through the psychometrics. Start a real stink."

"I'd make a poor ditch digger, Roland, but—if you can get nine others, I'll speak up. No, make that six others. I don't think they could ignore eight of us."

"You're a good man," Dr. Fuqua said. "I'll let you know. There's old McGivern—near retirement. I want to try him." He gulped his coffee and headed across the cafeteria.

Edel sat there, mildly thunderstruck at Fuqua's folly and his own daring. Fuqua had told them the kind of bird he was by checking YES or NO on the silly-clever statements. He had told them that he liked a drink, that he thought most people were stupider than he, that he talked without thinking first, that he ate too much, that he was lazy, that he had an eye for a pretty ankle—that he was a human being not much better or worse than any other human being. But that wasn't the way to do it, and damned well Fuqua had known it. You simply told yourself firmly, for the duration of the test: *"I am a yuk. I have never had an independent thought in my life; independent thinking scares me. I am utterly monogamous and heterosexual. I go bowling with the boys. Television is the greatest of the art forms. I believe in installment purchasing. I am a yuk."*

That these parlor games were taken seriously by some people was an inexplicable, but inexorable, fact of life in the twentieth century. Edel had yukked his way through scholarships, college admissions, faculty appointment and promotions and had never thought the examinations worse than a bad cold. Before maturity set in, in the frat house, they had eased his qualms about psychometric testing with the ancient gag: "You ain't a man until you've had it three times."

Brave of him, pretty brave at that, to back up Fuqua . . . if Roland could find six others.

Roland came to him at four o'clock to say he had not even found one other. "I don't suppose—no. I'm not asking you to, Dave. Two, it wouldn't be any good."

He went into the principal's office.

The next day a bright young substitute was teaching biology in his place and his student advisees had been parceled out among

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other teachers. Mr. Edel found that young Foster had now become his charge.

The 72 pupils in his English 114 class sat fascinated and watched the television screen. Dr. Henley Ragen was teaching them *Macbeth,* was teaching about nine hundred English 114 classes throughout the state *Macbeth,* and making them like it. The classroom rapport was thick enough to cut and spread with a shingle. The man's good, Edel thought, but *that* good? How much is feedback from their knowing he's famous for his rapport, how much is awe of his stupendous salary, still nowhere equal to nine hundred teachers' salaries?

Dr. Henley Ragen, *el magnífico,* portentously turned a page; there was grim poetry in the gesture. He transfixed the classroom (nine hundred classrooms) with Those Eyes. Abruptly he became Macbeth at the Banquet prepar'd. With nervous hilarity he shouted at his guests: *"You know your own degrees; sit down! At first and last, the hearty welcome!"* Stockstill at a lectern he darted around the table bluffly rallying the company, slipped off to chat, grimly-merry, with the first Murtherer at the door, returned to the banquet, stood in chilled horror at the Ghost in the chair, croaked: *"The table's full."*

Mr. Edel studied the faces of his 72 English 114ers. They were in hypnotic states of varying depths, except Foster. The Fireball was listening and learning, his good mind giving as well as taking. The intelligent face was alive, the jaw firm, and around him eyes were dull and jaws went slack. Foster could speak and write an English sentence, which perhaps was the great distinguishing mark between him and the rest of English 114. Blurted fragments of thought came from them, and the thoughts were clichés a hundred times out of a hundred.

Dr. Henley Ragen growled at them: *"We are yet but young in deed . . ."* and his eyes said the rest, promising horrors to come. He snapped the book shut like a pistol's bang; the 114ers popped out of their trances into dazed attentiveness. "Notebooks!" said Ragen (*qua* Ragen) and, 72 gunfighters quick on the draw, they snapped out books and poised their pens. Ragen spoke for ten minutes about the scene; every so often Those Eyes and an intensification of That Voice cued them to write a word or a phrase, almost without glancing at the paper. (Later each would look at his notes and not be surprised to find them lucid, orderly, even masterful summations of the brief lecture.)

As Dr. Henley Ragen bluffly delivered a sort of benediction

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from the altar of learning, Mr. Edel thought: well, they've got the Banquet Scene now; they'll own it forever. They way they own the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Ode to the West Wind*, *Arrowsmith*. A good deal better than nothing; *pauca sed matura*. Or so he supposed.

That afternoon from three to five Mr. Edel was available to his advisees; it was a period usually devoted to catching up on his paper work. Beyond making out the student's assignment schedule, a task traditionally considered beyond the capacity of the young, he had done no advising in years. And Foster appeared.

His handshake was manly, his grin was modest but compelling. He got to the point. "Mr. Edel, do you think I could swing an Enrichment Project in English?"

The teacher hardly knew what he meant. "Enrichment? Well, we haven't been doing that lately, Foster. I suppose it's still in the optional curriculum—"

"Yes sir, form sixty-eight, English, paragraph forty-five, section seven. *'Opportunities shall be afforded to students believed qualified by advisors to undertake projects equivalent to College Freshman English term papers and the grades therefor shall be entered on the students' records and weighed as evidence in assigning students' positions in the graduating class.'*"

Mr. Edel had found Foster's card by then and was studying it. The boy's schedule was brutal, but his grade average was somewhere between B+ and A. "Foster," he told him, "there's such a thing as a breaking point. I—I understand you want very much to go to Colorado Springs." (Poor Fuqua! What had become of...?)

"Very much, sir. They expect the best—they have a right to expect the best. I'm not complaining, Mr. Edel, but there are girls with straight-A averages who aren't working as hard as I am. Well, I've just got to beat them at their own game."

Mr. Edel understood. It wasn't just girls, though mostly it was. There was a type of student who was no trouble, who did the work, every smidgen of it, who read every word of every assigned page, who turned in accurate, curiously dead, echoless, unresonant papers which you could not in decency fault though you wanted to tear them up and throw them in their authors' bland faces. You had a curious certainty that the adeptly-memorized data they reeled back on demand vanished forever once the need for a grade was gone, that it never by any chance became bone of their bone to strengthen them against future trials. Often enough when you asked them what they hoped to be they smilingly said: "I am going to teach. . . ."

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Foster, now. A boy who *fought* with the material and whipped it. He said: "Why so strong, Foster? What's it about?"

The boy said: "Space, partly. And my father. Two big challenges, Mr. Edel. I think I'm a very lucky fellow. Here I am with a new frontier opening up, but there are lots of fellows my age who don't see it. I see it because of my father. It's wonderful to have a challenge like that—can I be the man he is? Can I learn even more, be a better leader, a better engineer?"

Mr. Edel was moved deeply. "Your father just missed spaceflight, is that it?"

"By a whisker," Foster said regretfully. "Nothing can be done about it except what I'm doing."

"He's an aero-engineer?"

"He can do *anything*," Foster said positively. "And he has!"

A picture of the elder Foster was forming in Mr. Edel's mind —young Fireball grown taller, solider and grizzled, the jaw firmed and controlled, the voice more powerful and sure. And, unquestionably, leather puttees.

Foster's card said he had no mother, which made it more understandable. This fine boy was hard material honed to an edge, single-purposed. Did he have a young Hap Arnold here in his office? A Curtis LeMay? They had to come from somewhere, those driving, wide-ranging leaders and directors of millions. The slow-rolling conquest of space needed such men, first to navigate and pilot so no navigator or pilot would ever be able to snow them, then to move up step by step through research to command, then to great command.

"I'll bet on you, Foster," he said abruptly. "We can't let the—the future *English* teachers outpoint you with their snap courses. You'll do me a term paper on . . . on *Henry V*. First, read it. Read *hell* out of it and take notes. Get in touch with me when you think you're ready to talk it over. I happen to be a bachelor; I have time in the evenings. And talk it over with your father, if you can persuade him to read along with you."

Foster laughed. "I'm afraid Dad's much too busy for Shakespeare, but I'll try. Thanks, Mr. Edel." He left.

Mr. Edel, with considerable trouble, found a pad of forms in his desk which covered Enrichment Projects, English, Advisor's Permission for. He filled one out for Foster, looked it over and said, surprised: "Again, damn it!" He had checked the box for Permission Denied. He tore up the form—it was discolored anyway from being so long on the top of the pad—and meticulously made out another, checking the various boxes with exquisite care.

That night after dinner he tried

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to telephone Roland Fuqua, but service to his number had been discontinued. Alarmed, he buzzed over on his scooter to Fuqua's apartment, one of a quarter-million in the Dearborn Village Development of Metropolitan Life & Medical. Roland's hulking, spoiled and sullen boy Edward (who had unilaterally changed his name last year to Rocky) was the only person there, and he was on his way out: "to an orgy with some pigs," if you believed him. He said "Little Rollo" was now a night-shift lab assistant in a pet-food company's Quality Control Department and this was his mother's Bingo night. "You want I should give a message?" he asked satirically, overplaying the role of intolerably burdened youth.

"If it won't break your back," Mr. Edel said, "please ask your father to give me a ring sometime."

Again in his own small apartment Mr. Edel thought of many things. Of the ancient papyrus which, when decoded, moaned: "*Children are not now as respectful and diligent as they were in the old days.*" Of *Henry V*. Of Dr. Fuqua drudging away on pet-food protein determinations and lucky to be doing that. Of his own selfish, miserable, lonely comfort in his castle. Of Foster, the hero-king to be, and of himself, Aristotle to the young Alexander. Had there been a dozen such in his twenty years? There had not. Marie Perrone still sent him her novels, and they were almost popular and very bad. Jim Folwell had gone to Princeton and into the foreign service and that was that. Janice Reeves and Ward Freiman were married and both teaching at Cornell. What had happened to the hundred thousand others he had taught only God and themselves knew. If they all dropped dead at this instant, tomorrow morning some trucks would not roll for an hour or two, some advertising agencies would come near to missing a few deadlines, some milk would sour and some housewives would bang, perplexed, on the doors of shops that should be open, a few sales would languish unclosed, a few machines would growl for lack of oil. But Foster might land on the moons of Jupiter.

Therefore let him learn, make him learn, how to be great. He would meet his Pistols, Bardolphs, Fluellens, a few Exeters, and without doubt his Cambridges and Scroops: clowns, fussbudgets, friends and traitors. It could matter to nobody except herself if her agent ripped poor arty Marie Perrone up her back; it might matter a great deal to—he shied at the alternatives—to, let us say, Man, if Foster trusted a Pistol to do his work, or passed over a Fluellen for his mannerisms, or

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failed to know a Scroop when he saw one.

We will arm the young heroking, he thought comfortably just before sleep claimed him.

Roland Fuqua had been transferred to Toledo by the pet-food company. He wrote to Edel:

Instinct tells me not to queer my luck by talking about it, but anyway—I really believe I'm moving up in the organization. The other day a party from Sales came through the QC labs and one of them, just an ordinary-looking Joe, stopped to talk to me about the test I was running—asked very intelligent questions. You could have knocked me over with a Folin-Wu pipette when they told me who he was afterwards: just John McVey himself, Assistant Vice-President in Charge of Sales! Unaccustomed as I am to pipe dreams, it can't be a coincidence that it was me he talked to instead of half-a-dozen other lab men with seniority; I don't know what he has in mind exactly, maybe some kind of liaison job between QC and Sales, which would put me on Staff level instead of Hourly-Rated. . . .

Mr. Edel felt sick for him. He would have to answer the letter at once; if he put it off he would put it off again and their correspondence would peter out and Fuqua would be betrayed. But what could he tell him—that he *was* pipe-dreaming, that "coincidences" like that happen to everybody a hundred times a day, that Roland Fuqua, Ph.D., would never, at 45, move from the Quality Control lab to the glittering world of Sales?

He stalled for time by stamping and addressing the envelope first, then hung over the typewriter for five minutes of misery. It was Wednesday night; Foster was due for the twelfth and last of his Enrichment sessions. Mr. Edel tried not to cause Fuqua pain by dwelling on the world of teaching he had lost—but *what* else was there to write about?

I'm sure you remember Foster—the fly boy? I've been taking him, on one of those Enrichment things, through Henry V. *This is supposed to win him .0001 of a place higher on the graduating class list and get him into the Academy, and I suppose it will. Things are very simple for Foster, enviably so. He has a titan of engineering for a father who appears to commute between the Minas Geraes power station in Brazil, his consulting service in the city and trouble spots in the I.T.&T. network—maybe I should say commutate. I honestly do not believe that Foster has to lie his way through the personality profiles like the rest of us mortals—*

Now there was a hell of a thing to put down. He was going to rip the page out and start again, then

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angrily changed his mind. Fuqua wasn't a cripple; it wasn't Bad Form to mention his folly; it would be merely stupid to pretend that nothing had happened. He finished out the page with a gush of trivia. Sexy little Mrs. Dickman who taught Spanish was very visibly expecting. New dietician in the cafeteria, food cheaper, but worse than ever. Rumored retirement of old man Thelusson again and one step up for History teachers if true. Best wishes good luck regards to Beth and the youngster, Dave. He whipped the page into folds, slipped it into the envelope and sealed the flap fast, before he could change his mind again. It was time to stop treating Fuqua like a basket case; if convalescence had not begun by now it never would.

His bell rang: Foster was on time, to the minute.

They shook hands rather formally. "Like a cup of coffee, Foster?" Mr. Edel asked.

"No thank you, sir."

"I'll make one for myself then. Brought your paper? Good. Read it to me."

While he compounded coffee Foster began to read. After much discussion they had settled on "Propaganda and Reality in *Henry V*" as his topic. The boy had read Holinshed where relevant, articles in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and appropriate history texts. Beyond suggesting these, Mr. Edel had left him alone in the actual treatment of his paper. He did not quite know what to expect from Foster beyond careful organization and an absence of gross blunders; he waited with interest.

The paper was a short one—1500 words, by request. Nevertheless it gave Mr. Edel a few painful shocks. There were two sneers at "deluded groundlings," much reveling in the irony of the fictional Henry's affection for his Welsh captain as against the real Henry who had helped to crush Glendower and extinguish the Welsh as a nation, and fun with the Irishman Macmorris who came loyally from Shakespeare's pen in 1599 while "the general of our gracious empress" was doing his best to extinguish the Irish as a nation. Henry's *"we have now no thoughts in us but France (save those to God)"* was evaluated as "the poet's afterthought". The massacre of the French prisoners at Agincourt, Henry's brutal practical joke with the pretended glove of a French nobleman, his impossibly compressed and eloquent courtship of Katharine, were all somehow made to testify to a cynical Shakespeare manipulating his audience's passions.

The great shock was that Foster approved of all this. *"It was a time of troubles and England was besieged from without and threat-*

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ened from within. The need of the time was a call to unity, and this Shakespeare provided in good measure. The London mob and the brotherhood of apprentices, always a potential danger to the Peace, no doubt was inspired and pacified for a time by the Shakespearean version of a successful aggressor's early career."

Modestly Foster folded his typescript.

It was ground into Mr. Edel that you start by saying whatever words of praise are possible and then go on to criticize. Mechanically he said warm things about the paper's organization, its style, its scholarly apparatus. "But—aren't you taking a rather too utilitarian view of the play? It is propaganda to some extent, but should you stop short with the propaganda function of the play? I'm aware that you're limited by your topic and length, but I wish there had been some recognition of the play's existence as a work of art."

Foster said, smiling: "Well, I'm new at this, Mr. Edel. I didn't know I was supposed to stray. Should I revise it?"

"Oh, no," Mr. Edel said quickly. "I didn't mean to imply that you're unarguably mistaken in anything you said. I don't know why I'm fussing at you about it at all. I suppose you've taken a sort of engineering approach to literature, which is natural enough. Did you ever succeed in engaging your father in the project?"

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Edel. You can imagine."

"He's been away?"

"Why, no." Foster was surprised. But *didn't* his father go away now and then? He thought Foster had said—or *almost* said—

He took the paper from him and leafed through it. "This is quite good enough for a pass, Foster. It'll be read by somebody in the English Chairman's office, but that's a formality. Let's say you've completed your Enrichment Option." He stuck out his hand and Foster took it warmly. "That, then, is that. Do you have to run now?"

"With all rods out," Foster said. "I've got to prepare for the Math Team Meet, a hundred things. Can I mail that for you?"

It was the letter to Fuqua on his desk. "Why, thanks."

"Thank *you*, Mr. Edel, for the time you've taken with me."

Well worth it, son, Mr. Edel thought after the door closed. There aren't many like you. The paper was a little cold and cynical, but you'll learn. Criticism's heady stuff. Speaking quite objectively, you've done a piece thoroughly consistent with College Freshman English work, and that's what you were supposed to do. If it helps get you into Colorado Springs, I've done my job.

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He turned in the paper the next day to the English Chairman's office and the Assistant Chairman read it while he waited, mumbled "Seems quite competent" and entered a Completed on Foster's grade card. He let his eyes run over the other grades and whistled. "A beaver," he said.

"All rods out," Mr. Edel smugly corrected him, and went to the door. A freshman girl who knew him, on messenger duty with the Principal's Office, intercepted him in the corridor. The message: he would please report at once to the Principal; Mrs. Giovino would be advised to take such classes as he might be obliged to miss.

"*Classes?*" he asked the girl, unbelievingly.

She knew nothing.

The Assistant Principal for Teaching Personnel received him at once, alone in his two-window office. He was a gray man named Sturgis whose pride was getting to the point. "Edel," he asked, "are you sure you're *happy* here?"

Mr. Edel said, recognizing a sheet of typing on Sturgis' desk: "May I ask how you got that letter of mine?"

"Surely. Your young friend Foster turned it in."

"But why? Why?"

"I shall quote: '*I honestly do not believe that Foster has to lie his way through the personality profiles like the rest of us mortals.*' If you believed this, Edel, why did you counsel him to lie? Why did you show him this letter as proof that you lied yourself?"

"Counsel him to lie? I never. I never."

His stammering was guilt; his sweating was guilt. Sturgis pitied him and shook his head. "He kept a little record," Sturgis said. "Ha, a 'log' he called it—he's quite space-minded; did you know?"

"I know. I demand a hearing, God damn it!"

Sturgis was surprised. "Oh, you'll get a hearing, Edel. We always give hearings; you know that."

"I know that. Can I get back to my classes now?"

"Better not. If you're not *happy* here . . ."

Mr. Edel and Foster met that afternoon in the soda shop two blocks from the school. Mr. Edel had been waiting for him, and Foster saw the teacher staring at him from a booth. He excused himself politely from the Math Team crowd around him and joined Mr. Edel.

"I feel I owe you an explanation, sir," Foster said.

"I agree. How could you—why—?"

Foster said apologetically: "They like you to be a little ruthless at the Academy. This will stand out on my record as a sign of moral fiber. No, Mr. Edel, don't try to hit me. It'll make things

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look that much worse at the hearing. Goodby, sir."

He rejoined his handsome, quiet crowd at the counter; in a moment they were talking busily about elliptic functions and Fourier series. Mr. Edel slunk from the place knowing that there was only one court of appeal.

3379 Seneca Avenue turned out to be a shocking slum tenement back of a municipal bus garage. The apartment, Mr. Edel thought, after his initial surprise, would be one of those "hideaways"—probably a whole floor run together, equipped with its own heating and air-conditioning, plumbing replaced . . . after all, would Foster Senior give a damn about a fancy address? Not that engineer.

But the Foster apartment, or so said a card tacked to a rust-stiffened bell-pull, was only one of a dozen like it on the cabbage-reeking fifth floor. And the paunchy, unshaven, undershirted man who came to the door and stood reeling in the doorway said: "Yah, I'm Ole Foster. Yah, I got a boy in Nixon High. What the crazy kid do now? He's crazy, that kid. Maybe I get a little drunk sometime, I got a little pension from I hurt my back driving the buses, people don't appreciate, don't realize. You wanna drink? What you say you come for?"

"About your son . . ."

"So I beat him up!" the man yelled, suddenly belligerent. "Ain't I his father? He talks smart to me, I got a right to beat him some, ain't I? People don't appreciate. . . ."

Old Foster lost interest and, mumbling, closed the door.

Mr. Edel walked slowly down the stairs, not able to forgive, but feeling at least the beginnings of eventual ease from the knowledge of why he was being destroyed.

C. M. KORNBLUTH

A MEMORIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cyril Kornbluth's short stories may never be completely identified. In his prolific teens, he was writing under 18 or 19 pseudonyms at once, 10 of which have been publicly acknowledged. The two best known are S. D. Gottesman and Cecil Corwin, both used as pseudonyms for Kornbluth solos; some of the other names cover collaborations of as many as 5 writers, none of whom remembers today who wrote what. So this is, in the strictest literal sense, a bibliography, *dealing with Kornbluth's published books. Hardcover editions are in Roman letters, paperbacks in italics.* NOTE: *In most cases the magazine and book versions differ sharply.*

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[1]both hardcover and paperback editions; the latter is, technically, the true "first edition." [2]not s.f. or fantasy. [3]In preparation.

The special (and tragic) circumstances under which this issue was put together have squeezed out the usual Recommended Reading *department. Many full reports next month—and meanwhile buy immediately Clifton Fadiman's* FANTASIA MATHEMATICA *(Simon & Schuster, $4.95), one of the most tasteful and best patterned science-fantasy anthologies ever edited (and containing a Kornbluth limerick).*—A. B.

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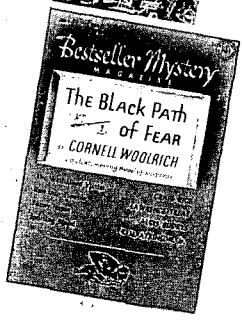

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